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PROCESSES OF TYPIFICATION AND ALLOCATION
IN A 9-13 MIDDLE SCHOOL

Arthur Geoffrey Troman BEd

Submitted for Bachelor of Philosophy

Centre for Sociology and Social Research

The Open University

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ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with three related issues, the ideology and practice of middle schools, the perceptions middle school teachers have of their pupils and the allocation of their pupils to subject sets.

The account provided is ethnographic in nature, although case study data are supplemented by evidence derived from repertory grid technique and large scale surveys.

The ideology of middle schooling is contrasted with the reality of life in 9-13 middle schools, as indicated by data derived from large scale surveys and previous ethnographic studies.

The development of Midway, the case study school, from a secondary modern school to a middle school is described. This development is then related to the perceptions held by the present staff of the school.

Teacher constructs and the teachers' perceptions of their pupils are located in teacher biography and different traditions of schooling. These teacher perspectives are in turn related to the allocation process in which first year pupils are allocated to ability groups (sets) for Mathematics.

The findings of this study are, firstly, that there is a gulf between the ideology and practice of middle schooling, which is revealed by the internal organisation of the 9-13 middle school: this does not reflect egalitarian concerns, but rather provides for the early selection of pupils for different routes through schooling, secondly, that this selection is found to take place at an early stage, and, thirdly, that teachers' perceptions of their pupils are highly influential in this process.

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A G Troman 1985

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This study is concerned with three issues: middle schools, selective ability grouping in the form of a setting system and teachers' typifications of their pupils. These themes are explored and related through the medium of a case study of one 9-13 middle school. Ideological conceptions about middle schools embodied in educational policies are contrasted with practice. The prime focus of the study is differentiation. Informal differentiation taking place at the classroom level is described by analysis of the teachers' typifications of their pupils. These teacher perceptions are located in teacher biography and different traditions of schooling. The significance of these informal differentiation processes is then related to formal organisational differentiation processes when allocation of pupils to ability groups is discussed.

Differentiation processes in schools have been a recurring topic of interest to sociologists of education. Attention has been paid to differentiation processes in the primary school (Sharp and Green 1975), in the secondary modern (D Hargreaves 1967, Woods 1979) and in the grammar school (Lacey 1970). More recently, studies of differentiation in the comprehensive school (Ball 1981, Evans 1985) point to the persistence of academic and social selection as a function of English schooling.

The classic studies of D Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1970), while

dealing with organisational differentiation and its consequences for pupils, actually ignored allocation processes. At the time these studies were undertaken, the allocation of pupils to different routes through schooling was, in a sense, unproblematic. Pupils were assigned quickly to academic streams using the criterion of performance on the eleven plus test. However, the covert selection procedures of the contemporary comprehensive school (middle schools included here) or, as Davies and Evans (1984) put it 'the underlife of secondary school internal child markets', are worthy of exploration.

Despite current interest in the process of schooling, there has been a paucity of ethnographic accounts of social processes in the middle school. Recently, however, there have been indications of change (Pollard 1981, A Hargreaves 1985), but a comprehensive account of patterns of typification and allocation in the middle school is still awaited.

It is the purpose of this study to examine some of the social interactions which attend the covert 'sorting out' processes in one 9-13 middle school. Since this study is ethnographic in nature, it gives insights into the reality of life in one institution at a particular stage in its development. As such, it is hoped that it will complement other case studies and ethnographies by increasing understanding of life in the middle school, a comparatively recent educational enterprise.

Chapter 1 sets out official views of the English middle school, and this is contrasted with evidence from recent case studies and national surveys. It is suggested that there is a gulf between ideology and practice and that selection procedures have become a prominent feature of life in the middle school. Chapter 2 continues with the theme of selection. The literature on typification is reviewed, and ways in

which teachers differentiate pupils informally at classroom level and organisational differentiation are considered. Chapter 3 describes the origins and present organisation of the case study school, Midway Middle. This is achieved in the main by examination of teacher perspectives, particularly those of prominent reality definers in the school. Chapter 4 looks at ways in which the first year teachers at Midway Middle differentiate between their pupils informally in the classroom. The teachers' typifications of their pupils are described, and the occupational culture of teaching is considered as a determinant of teacher perspectives. Chapter 5 examines the social interactions which attend the allocation of first year pupils to their Maths sets, and relates the social knowledge the teachers have of their pupils in the classroom to the process of organisational differentiation.

CHAPTER 1

The 9-13 Middle School: Ideology and Practice

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The 9-13 Middle School: Ideology and Practice

It is the purpose of this chapter to contrast the official ideology of the 9-13 middle school with recent data which provide insights into the reality of life in these schools. Interest will be focused on the extent of selective ability grouping practices in middle schools. This will be taken as an indicator of the dominance of secondary school influences on the internal organisation of middle schools.

It is now becoming clear that, with the creation of middle schools in the mid sixties, economic reasons were more influential than educational reasons (Blyth and Derricott 1977, Taylor and Garson 1982). Local authorities, confronted with the twin problem of introducing comprehensivisation and of raising the school leaving age, could in some areas achieve both of these aims by adopting a plan incorporating middle schools while preserving existing buildings. In an era of educational expansion with a limited budget, a middle school scheme was seen as an attractive alternative. Pressure from local authorities, anxious to achieve comprehensivisation without dramatically increased expenditure, resulted in the Secretary of State changing the legal age of transfer to secondary schooling. Although this change in the age of transfer to twelve or thirteen was made almost purely for reasons of economic expediency (A Hargreaves 1980), it was soon to be justified on educational grounds by the forthcoming Plowden Report of 1967.¹ Thus the political and economic strategy was to be given educational credibility. That this may have been neat 'ministerial manoeuvring' is recognised by Taylor and

Garson (1982):

'... with the foreknowledge that Plowden was going to recommend changes based on well argued, sound educational criteria, the Secretary of State was able to propose changes in the transfer age based on financial and administrative expediency knowing that his educational flank was well covered. It was a classical piece of political manoeuvring allowing greater flexibility for those LEAs who wanted and could make use of it while at the same time appearing cautious and not imposing a uniform system on the country as a whole ahead of Plowden.' (Taylor and Garson 1982, p 13)

The reliance on ideology (pronouncements from Plowden in this example) to justify or mask economic expediency characterised the subsequent development of the middle school. Having been born of economic necessity, in some areas, there was a growing need to justify the emergent English middle schools on educational grounds. In part, this justification was provided by the Plowden Report (1967) which advocated the extension of 'good' primary practice to the age of twelve. The report promulgated the virtues of the child centred progressive primary ideology. In so doing, it created what Davies and Bernstein (1972, p 20) have described as the 'horticultural model' of the primary school. This model stressed the psychological development and cultural enrichment of the child, and played down such questions as social mobility and the maximisation of talent. The report also expressed fears about the adverse effects on eleven year old pupils, of the internal organisation of secondary schools, which were at the time geared to subject specialism and selection. Plowden was highly influential on the development of middle school ideology, for it provided not only educational legitimation for a change in transfer age but also a curriculum model for the emergent middle schools.² These influences and pressures on the emergent middle schools arose from the primary sector. However, other influences and pressures were exerted by the secondary sector. The expansion of middle schools nationally was part of comprehensivisation.

Ball (1981) describes three models of the comprehensive school, each

one embracing a distinctive ideology. They are the egalitarian, the meritocratic, and the integrative models of the comprehensive school. The internal organisation of a comprehensive school adopting the egalitarian model would ensure equal access and opportunity for working class pupils. A meritocratic comprehensive would be engaged in the identification and promotion of a meritocratic elite but would 'not offer a way of substantially modifying the nature of capitalist society (as in the egalitarian model) but promised to make that system operate more efficiently' (A Hargreaves 1983, p 30).³ The integrative model emphasised social mixing and the eradication of social class differences, a mode of organisation producing tolerant and socially-conscious citizens. Ball (1981) notes that in any contemporary comprehensive school, while elements of all three models may exist, it is meritocratic concerns which are dominant.⁴ A Hargreaves (1983,1985) has argued that initial justifications for middle schools were meritocratic in nature and showed concern for the 'able pupil' and efficient selection, but some of the central elements of middle school ideology were derived from the pronouncements of Plowden.

Since the middle school would be sandwiched between the existing traditions of primary and secondary education, its identity was to emphasise its 'middleness'. As the middle school was a new mode of schooling and catered for an age range traditionally educated under two roofs, the ideology which emerged stressed the 'uniqueness' of the middle school. This ideology of 'uniqueness' was, apparently, to ensure that the new middle schools, particularly the 9-13 variety, did not become some kind of 'educational pantomime horse with one pair of legs in the primary sector and the other in the secondary' (Burrows 1978, p 46). The literature produced by educational administrators, educationalists and the Inspectorate to provide educational justification for the middle school constitutes what has become the ideology of middle schooling.

The overall effect of these outpourings was to create a remarkably consistent image of the 'ideal' middle school. Nias (1980) notes recurrent elements of this ideology. The 'ideal' middle school is presented in the literature as being 'committed to egalitarianism and democratic decision-making, responsive to pressures from within and without, swift to innovate, ready to espouse conflicting value systems yet unified and stabilised by shared self-confidence and a commitment to cooperation and consensus' (p 71). These then are the components which build for the middle school its identity - the middle school was to be an egalitarian, democratic, responsive, innovative, pluralistic, optimistic and integrative institution. It is on this first characteristic of the 'ideal' middle school, egalitarianism, that I now wish to concentrate.

Of egalitarianism, A Hargreaves (1983) has pointed out that egalitarianism arguments were never to the fore in initial justifications for the middle school system, ie arguments used by educational administrators and local politicians. However, Nias does show them to be a central feature in subsequent middle school ideology generated by educationalists, DES and the Schools Council (Nias 1980). Egalitarianism in the middle school was to mean equality through a 'new' curriculum. Egalitarianism would mean reduced emphasis on selective ability grouping practices (assumed to be prevalent in the secondary sector) because of the location of the middle school some distance from public examinations.

An egalitarian curriculum and school organisation has no place for hasty and rigid categorisation of pupils into groups using the sole criterion of measured intelligence or its operational form, 'ability'. The effects of streaming (mostly adverse) in the primary school had been exposed (Barker Lunn 1970) and the egalitarian movement pressing for comprehensive education was well aware of the socially divisive mechanism of early

selection. The DES publication 'Launching Middle Schools' (1970) and 'Towards the Middle School' (1970) were both critical of and opposed to a selective curriculum. With the inevitability of a selective curriculum, producing a differentiated curriculum (different ability groups being exposed to different educational treatments) the Schools Council favoured the delaying of selection and differentiation until a later stage, for 'despite the foreshadowing effect of intended destinations, differentiation within the curriculum should be kept at a minimum until thirteen years' (Schools Council 1972, p 9). This would then effectively shift the selection function from the middle school into the upper school. Certainty that streaming would not be a feature of life in the middle school was stated by Gannon and Whalley (1975, p 73) who predicted that 'the main teaching organisation will be based on mixed ability groups', and this opinion was echoed by Blyth and Derricott (1977, p 55) who, in reinforcing the unique identity of the middle school, forecasted that pupils 'are likely to be less rigidly separated than in secondary or even junior schools' and underlined egalitarian aspects of the middle school in claiming that 'middle schools have been born with a propensity towards non-streaming'. The notion of the egalitarian curriculum was central to the ideology stressing the uniqueness of middle schools. Such a notion placed no emphasis on the 'gate-keeping' role of the teacher (as evaluator/selector).^{It} made all areas of the curriculum open to all children, was diametrically opposed to grouping by ability.^{also} It /espoused new forms of organisation, such as mixed ability teaching.

Doubts that the reality of life in middle schools may not reflect the ideology created for them have recently been expressed (Hargreaves 1980, Lynch 1980, Nias 1980). Nias suspects a discrepancy between the 'ideal' and the real. Lynch sees the middle school curriculum as impotent in solving problems of educability as social democratic ideology (mother

of middle school ideology) is of solving economic recession and the structural failings of capitalism. A Hargreaves⁽¹⁹⁸⁰⁾ points to the inherent tension in the 9-13 middle school, a theme introduced earlier by Blyth and Derricott (1977) in their description of middle schools as 'areas of potential conflict' (p 96).

A Hargreaves claims that tension is inherent in 9-13 middle schools because first, the 'new schools' inherited staff from both the primary and secondary sector (A Hargreaves 1980), and second, the goals of all education in a capitalist society are fundamentally contradictory (1978), the education system being required to educate the whole child and yet socialise the child for a class-stratified society. The middle school in this light can be seen as an arena of conflict, with the two competing traditions of primary and secondary education under one roof. Progressive primary ideology has expressed ideas about educating the whole child, while secondary education has been concerned with public examinations and occupational choice.⁵ In the 8-12 middle school, the curriculum could be expected to be distinctively primary in nature (Taylor and Garson 1982), but in the 9-13 middle school, two years, the third and fourth years (traditionally the first two years of secondary schooling), may be seen to require a mode of organisation which facilitates transition from primary to secondary practices. Although the notion of 'smooth transition' obscures this inherent tension, the influence of public examinations and high status subjects in the upper school make demands on the curriculum of the 9-13 middle school (Ginsburg, Meyenn, Miller, Ranceford-Hadley 1977) particularly in years three and four, because option choice and, therefore, career choice is not far removed, with the process taking place at the end of the first year in the 13-18 upper school.

The tradition, primary or secondary, which exerts most pressure and influence on the internal organisation of 9-13 middle schools, can be gauged by surveying the organisation and curriculum and categorising which features are associated with primary practice and which with secondary. A Hargreaves (1985) has pointed to the dangers of assuming that the term 'primary' subsumes progressive, and the term 'secondary' subsumes traditional. He notes the persistence of the elementary tradition (stressing acquisition of basic skills, fixed intellectual capacities of pupils and control) in the contemporary middle school. These features certainly have more in common with secondary schooling than progressive primary schooling. However, I think it is fair to claim that one is more likely to encounter high levels of selection and specialisation in the secondary sector than in the primary. Distinctive features of primary practice would be those associated with low levels of selective ability grouping and high levels of child centred learning, whilst prominent secondary features would be high levels of selective ability grouping and subject specialism. Later in this chapter, I will take the extent of selective ability grouping in 9-13 middle schools as a key indicator of secondary practice. If the middle school is an arena of conflict between the primary and secondary traditions or between the educative and selection functions of education, an analysis of the extent of ability grouping practices in 9-13 middle schools will be an important indicator of the dominant tradition (primary or secondary) in the middle school.

However, before this is done, it is important to distinguish between intended and unintended outcomes of ability grouping. Teachers who adopt a particular kind of ability grouping may offer an educational rationale for this choice. This rationale would contain assumptions about the process of teaching and learning. A rationale for setting (the most

popular mode in 9-13 middle schools) might rest on the following assumptions:

- (1) It is possible to assess ability with accuracy.
- (2) Pupils of similar ability work better together than with pupils of different ability.
- (3) Mistakes in allocation are rare and can be remedied by transferring pupils from one set to another.
- (4) It is easier for teachers to teach homogeneous ability groups than heterogeneous ability groups.
- (5) Setting caters for special intelligence rather than general intelligence, ie a pupil can be in different sets for different subjects.

Source: adapted from D Hargreaves 1972, p 18

Setting would therefore appear to facilitate teaching and learning. An unintended consequence of this ability grouping could be social selection. The link between academic selection and social selection has been forged elsewhere (D Hargreaves 1967, Ford 1969, Lacey 1970), and it is assumed in this study that organisations choosing academic selection (streaming, banding or setting) would also generate, perhaps unintentionally, social selection. The rationale for academic differentiation which would be offered by the organisation in order to legitimate it would probably resemble that which D Hargreaves (1972) suggests. In this way, educational reasons would mask the latent function of the school as an agency for social selection. Recent studies of mixed ability primary classrooms (Sharp and Green 1975) and mixed ability secondary school classrooms (Ball 1981) have shown grouping practices with high educational and egalitarian appeal to be as efficient in social selection and the reproduction of inequalities due to social class as rigid as selective ability grouping.⁶ However, a school choosing to group pupils by ability is aligning itself closely with the selection function of

education, the mode of selection being overt rather than covert.

The selection function of 9-13 middle schools is underplayed in publications which contribute to the official ideology. However, recent data (to be discussed later) have shown this feature to be central to middle school organisation. Selection on the criterion of ability has traditionally taken the form of streaming. Ford (1969) has shown that 'new' forms of schooling, the comprehensive school, can preserve old styles of selection (ie streaming) to create within a comprehensive school the former tri-partite system of grammar, technical and secondary modern school, with A stream pupils following a grammar type curriculum, and D stream pupils following a secondary modern type curriculum. The positive relationship between social class and stream placement in Ford's school shows that the comprehensive school, founded on egalitarian principles in adopting a meritocratic internal organisation, is as efficient in underlining social class inequalities as was the tri-partite system. Old forms of schooling (the secondary modern school) which have adopted new styles of selection (option schemes) have recently been shown to be efficient in their selection function (Woods 1979), with the implicit covert mechanism of the option scheme replacing the explicit and overt streaming in the later years of secondary schooling. New forms of schooling (comprehensive schools) adopting new modes of selection (banding) have proved to be as efficient as old forms of schooling in reproducing class inequality (Ball 1981). Recently, doubts have been expressed about mixed ability grouping as an egalitarian measure (Davies and Evans 1984). The theme that the authors develop is that in mixed ability grouping (adopted for control rather than educational reasons) in the comprehensive school old forms of differentiation are preserved but concealed, in some cases, by 'new' pedagogic styles. This theme is further developed by Evans (1985) who

again points to the failure of mixed ability as a radical solution to educability problems. Evans found that pupils were differentiated according to their conformity to the 'new' pedagogic styles of mixed ability teaching, and also that these initial differentiations were quickly institutionalised in the form of a setting system. His pessimistic message is that 'the demise of selective forms of schooling and grouping does not necessarily signify anything like the end of selection and differentiation in schools and classrooms' (Evans 1985, p 159). These studies of the progressive primary school (Sharp and Green 1975), the streamed comprehensive school (Ford 1969), the unstreamed comprehensive school (Ball 1981) and the initially unstreamed but later setted comprehensive school (Evans 1985) show academic/social selection to be a pervasive feature of life in schools. However, formalised and institutionalised selection does seem to be a feature of the secondary sector (Ball noted banding and options, and Evans noted setting). What then is the pattern of selection in the 9-13 middle school?

When selective ability grouping is discussed in the context of the middle school, the terms 'streaming', 'banding' and 'setting' are sometimes used almost interchangeably, but it is now clear that the practice of ability grouping by forming sets of ability for different subjects is more widespread than the other two in 9-13 middle schools (Taylor and Garson 1982, DES 1983). Setting was seen initially to be an organisational device which catered for the cognitive demands of Maths and French (DES 1970), although widespread use in the rest of the curriculum was never advocated by the Inspectorate. What then is the extent of setting in 9-13 middle schools? Recent empirical studies (Ginsburg et al 1977, Meyenn and Tickle 1980, HMI 1983, A Hargreaves 1985) have shown setting to be a pervasive aspect of life in middle schools. The collective

findings of these studies explode the myth (created by early ideological publications) of the middle school as an egalitarian institution, and show clearly the domination of the selection function over the educative function.

An early indication that things may not be all they seem was provided by Ginsburg et al (1977) with their study of five 9-13 middle schools in one local authority. In describing the role of the middle school teacher, the authors recognised that one role of the teacher was as evaluator/selector, and the top down influence of the upper school was noted when they invoked Edwards (1972, p 91):

'To consider . . . that the new middle schools could go a long way to breaking the grip of examinations on education generally is not only wishful, but irresponsible thinking.'

This top down pressure was evident in the era of 11+ testing when primary schools adopted streaming as a form of preparation. It is now suggested by Ginsburg and his colleagues that setting is a response by the middle school to pressures of examinations and option choice in the upper school. In the Ginsburg study, setting was found not only to be a feature common to the five schools but also this formalised method of differentiation was found to be on the increase. This increase could be effected in two ways. The age at which children are set could be lowered, or the number of subjects in which setting occurs increased. The teachers in this study perceived the fourth year set placement as being influential on subsequent course placement in the upper school: these courses were recognised by the middle school teachers as a form of covert streaming. From this study we are left with the suspicion that the middle school is in reality an institution engaged in early selection procedures, and having a curriculum which is responsive to perceived upper school expectations. The study of Ginsburg and his colleagues is largely exploratory. It presents qualitative data in the form of isolated

quotations from middle school teachers. The result is a very brief piece of research, but one which offers important insights into life in 9-13 middle schools.

Setting arrangements in two schools are examined by Meyenn and Tickle (1980). The examination of the setting arrangements of the two schools is in order to seek, in the reality of middle schooling, an organisational style which reflects ideas contained in official views of middle schooling. The ideology of middle schooling stresses that the school is unique because it is a zone of transition between primary and secondary methods. It is apparent in the early literature that this transition should be gradual and smooth, a gentle progression from child centred, integrative and generalist teaching to timetabled specialist teaching. As one measure of the extent of secondary practice present in the middle school, Meyenn and Tickle considered the stages in two schools which marked the onset of setting practices. In one school, setting occurred only in the third and fourth years for English, French and Maths. In the other school studied, setting occurred in the second year for Maths, in the third year for some English, Maths and French, and in the fourth year for English, Maths, French and some Science. These findings show lack of congruence with the transition model of the middle school. The transition from primary ways of working to secondary ways was not gradual but sudden, the most marked change being between years two and three, the traditional 11+ dividing line. The ideology created for the middle school, which maintained that the best of primary practice would be extended in the transitional phase, is called into question by this study, which shows that organisational arrangements which reflect primary practice - eg time spent with class teacher and amount of generalist teaching - do not extend beyond years one and two, traditionally the top two years of the primary school. In one school, setting extended downwards

into the second year.

Both of the previously mentioned studies inform us of the realities of the curriculum and arrangements for ability grouping (the extent of setting) in only seven middle schools, but this serves to cast doubt on the ideology of the middle school. Certainly they expose discrepancies between ideology and reality.

Evidence that there is in reality a large gulf between ideology and practice is provided by two larger-scale surveys. It is the data gathered by these two surveys which I will now consider.

Taylor and Garson (1982) circulated a questionnaire to all 782 English middle schools. A response rate of 50% was achieved from 9-13 middle schools. This response rate is low and we must be careful about making generalisations from these data. However, the findings of Taylor and Garson (1982) do seem to fit comfortably with the other available evidence. Their survey presents and analyses information on all aspects of middle school organisation. Information about ability grouping shows a strong preference for setting in middle schools. Nationally, this preference is pronounced for 9-13 and for 10-13 middle schools. Streaming was shown to be a less popular mode of selection. In joint 5-12 middle schools, no streaming was recorded, and only 4.5% of 8-12 schools streamed according to ability. Streaming was more common in the 9-13 and 10-13 schools.

TABLE (1) 9-13 and 10-13 schools which stream their pupils for registration (Percentage frequency of schools)

	<u>Age of Pupils</u>			
	9+	10+	11+	12+
9-13	1.5	4.4	10.3	13.3
10-13	-	6.1	12.1	15.2

Source: Taylor and Garson 1982, p 128

In these schools the organisation of teaching groups reflects the organisation of registration groups. The 9-13 and 10-13 schools which had mixed ability registration groups but streamed pupils for all subjects constituted only 1% more of the 9-13 and 3% more of the 10-13 schools. A more common pattern of ability grouping was found to be setting.

TABLE (2) Percentage of 9-13 schools setting in different subjects

	<u>Year</u>			
	1	2	3	4
SUBJECTS	9+	10+	11+	12+
Mathematics	32.5	45.4	73.1	75.6
English	15.5	22.5	42.2	48.7
Foreign Languages	6.3	13.3	51.6	63.1
Science	4.8	5.5	18.8	26.6

Source: adapted from Taylor and Garson 1982, p 129

This is an aggregated table, and does not show patterns of setting in individual schools. However, it does give some indication of the extent of setting in 9-13 middle schools nationally. These data show the onset of setting at an early stage, 9+, particularly in the high status subjects of English and Maths, and also the operation of the traditional 11+ dividing line with increased setting occurring at 11+. These data begin to erode notions of the extension of primary practice and gradual transition. Alarming though these data are when set against middle school ideology, they may indeed not complete the picture. Many of the schools which provided the data, having taken the decision to set in a limited number of subjects, eg Maths, English, Foreign Languages and Science, then for administrative convenience and staffing constraints may have timetabled other subjects to fit a setting pattern. (A Hargreaves has termed this 'residual setting'). It may, therefore, be an unintended

consequence of setting for a few subjects that a school is committed to setting for most. This would result in non-academic areas of the curriculum receiving their pupils arranged in sets which had been formed by employing criteria chosen by academic coordinators. These data also give no indication of the composition of sets: if Set A for all subjects is composed of the same children, give or take an individual pupil, and the composition of Set D is the same, by and large, for all subjects, then this is not setting at all, but crypto-streaming. Taylor and Garson's study, while providing hitherto unknown data on the internal organisation of middle schools and showing the extent of setting, may not show the full influence of setting practices on the middle school curriculum.

Further data revealing the extent of setting is contained in the HMI survey of 48 middle schools (1983). Only the 9-13 type were surveyed. The report notes the variation in ability grouping practice with streaming, banding and setting all occurring in various schools. Of the 48 schools chosen, two schools streamed throughout the age range, seven streamed in the third year, and twelve in the fourth year. The remaining schools adopted banding or setting, with the majority of schools having forms of organisation including setting. The extent of setting in the survey is as follows:

TABLE (3) The number of schools setting for particular subjects in each year group

SUBJECT	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	4 th Year
English	5	11	25	29
Science	1	2	8	13
Maths	19	31	40	42
French	1	3	26	33

Source: HMI 9-13 Middle Schools: An Illustrative Survey 1983,
p 31

As with the Taylor and Garson study, we are only provided with the data showing the extent of setting for 'linear' subjects. Consequently, the survey is not as 'illustrative' as it claims. The popularity of setting in two of these subjects, Maths and French, had been predicted in Pamphlet N^o 57, and indeed these data show the universal appeal of setting in these subjects. Again in these data, we see the sharp divide between the extent of setting practices in the first two years and those in the last two, a situation HMI had warned against thirteen years earlier (DES 1970). The close association between subjects set in the middle school and high status subjects in the upper school is obvious from these data, but what of the low status subjects? HMI discuss gender composition of groups for low status subjects, but ignore discussion about ability grouping for them. As pointed out previously, this is also a failing of the Taylor and Garson study. The section of the Taylor and Garson questionnaire designed to elicit these data (Appendix 3.2 p 159) asks:

TABLE (4) In what kind of groups are pupils placed for teaching purposes?

SET FOR: Maths
 English
 French
 Science
 Others (please specify)

Either the respondents did not complete the section for other subjects or the authors omit these data, because in the study we are only provided with data for Maths, English, French and Science. This could indicate a fault in the questionnaire, reticence on the part of the respondents, or a partial interpretation of these data by the authors.

Both Taylor and Garson and HMI surveys fail to recognise the practice of residual setting. Also this survey fails to reveal the consistency or

lack of it in set composition - if set composition does not change markedly for different subjects, then the alleged flexibility and specificity of the setting system is questionable. We were alerted to the dangers of this ⁱⁿ Pamphlet N^o 57, when HMI warned 'to find oneself in many slow sets may be more depressing and confusing than being in a low ability stream' (p 26).

The findings of the HMI survey are at odds with the official ideology of the middle school. An 'ideal' image of the egalitarian and transitional curriculum cannot be sustained, now that the extent of (widespread setting) and location of (marked increase in setting at 11+) selective ability grouping of pupils is public knowledge. The authors of the HMI survey themselves hold in question the official middle school ideology by discovering a link between higher incidences of subject teaching and higher standards of work in those subjects (p 130). There is a close association between subject specialism and ability grouping. As A Hargreaves suggests: 'attitudes supporting ability grouping and subject specialism in high status areas . . . tend to go together' (A Hargreaves 1983, p 53). The authors of the survey claim that expertise in subject specialism at the middle school level has implications for the top two years of the primary school. This implies both approval of and recommendation of secondary type practices in lower age ranges. Elements of the official ideology which justified the new transfer age and transitional curriculum are now seen to be 'long standing questions' (p 130), and the whole issue 'about the age at which children should be introduced to subject teaching, how and when the balance between generalist and specialist teaching should change and the age of transfer from primary to secondary education' (p 130) is again firmly on the agenda.

Although the HMI survey does mention briefly an education system in contraction owing to falling rolls and financial constraint, its main

concern seems to be to supply an educational justification for what may be the demise of the middle school. HMI seem to argue that if secondary practices work (setting and subject specialism producing higher standards), then they could equally well be carried out in secondary schools, and for some authorities this would solve the problem of maintaining economically inefficient middle schools. If educational ideologies were created to mask economic expediency in the mid 60s, then little has changed in the ensuing twenty years, little of course but the nature of the ideology.

The studies cited confirm earlier doubts. (Nias 1980, A Hargreaves 1980, Lynch 1980) that there is a considerable gulf between middle school ideology and middle school practice and that the inherent tension in the 9-13 middle school has been resolved not by inventing an egalitarian curriculum, which offers gradual transition from primary ways of working to secondary ways of working, but by the domination of a secondary type organisation, which has its emphasis on subject specialism and selective ability grouping.

NOTESNote 1

Plowden recommended a national policy for a uniform age of transfer to secondary education. The two options which they had considered were transfer at 12 years or transfer at 13 years. Of the two, the committee favoured transfer at 12 years. This preference would facilitate the 8-12 middle school model. The considerations which led to this decision were partly to shape middle school ideology. The Plowden pronouncements were as follows:

- (a) Transfer at 12 years would allow sufficient time for pupils to prepare for public examinations.
- (b) The committee recognised that selection in the form of streaming was widespread in the first two years of secondary schooling. This system was also seen to be inflexible with transfer between streams being rare.
- (c) It was felt that in an 11-18 secondary school the middle years could be 'aimless' for pupils. Initial excitement and interest in the new school had waned and external examinations were some distance away. The committee therefore saw the solution to this problem to lie in delaying the start of secondary education.
- (d) Many young pupils would be 'lost' in the adult atmosphere of a school catering for pupils up to the age of eighteen. Headteachers who gave evidence to Plowden expressed fears that too large secondary schools may be created.
- (e) While recognising the demands made on secondary schools by the public examination system, the committee recommended the extension of 'good' primary practice beyond the age of eleven. The following extract from the Plowden report contains elements of both the extension and transition models of middle schooling.

'If the middle school is to be a new and progressive force it must develop further the curriculum methods and attitudes which exist at present in junior schools. It must move forward into what is now regarded as secondary school work, but it must not move so far away that it loses the best of primary education as we know it now. The extended programme will require teachers with a good grasp of subject matter, but we do not want the middle school to be dominated by secondary school influences. Clearly these aims could be achieved with transfer set at either 12 or 13.'

(Plowden Report paragraph 383, page 14)

Note 2

Although Plowden may have provided an initial educational justification for the middle school which served to stimulate subsequent ideological writings about these schools, other views exist. More recently, official views have been expressed which denote a changed ideological climate and which are at odds with those contained in Plowden. The Primary Survey (1978) and Middle School Survey (1983) both contain advocacy of subject specialisation, and the middle school survey does not note with disfavour the widespread nature of setting practices in English middle schools.

Note 3

A distinction needs to be made here between notions of equality which are contained in the meritocratic and egalitarian models of the comprehensive school. While equality arguments can be present in justifications of both models, attention must be paid to their exact meaning. In the meritocratic model, equality is presented in the form of equality of opportunity, which is seen to be achieved by sending

all pupils to one type of school. In this school, talent could be maximised and success achieved by an academic elite. The meritocratic model does not rule out the possibility of grouping by ability; indeed the internal organisation (streaming) of many early comprehensive schools merely mirrored the bi-partite system. The meritocratic comprehensive could then 'function in a way not essentially different from the selective system only "fairer" and more efficient' (Ball 1981, p 7). This was 'fairer' in the sense that since all pupils attended the same school, parity of esteem, between different routes through schooling, was more likely. This model, however, exists in a cultural vacuum and ignores questions of cultural disadvantage; it says nothing of changing the curriculum or mode of internal organisation of comprehensive schools in order to equalise the educational experience of pupils.

By contrast, the egalitarian model stresses equality of treatment. Egalitarian ideology recognises cultural disadvantage and advocates a revolution in curriculum, as Ball claims:

'It is only in the case of the egalitarian school that the processes of teaching and learning themselves are considered as part of what is to be changed, so that the nature, as well as the form, of the educational process becomes problematic.'
(Ball 1981, p 10)

In the case of middle schools, meritocratic arguments were to the fore in initial justification (mainly preferred by education officers and local politicians) but subsequent writings about the middle school (by HMI and educationalists) contained egalitarian policy intentions. For many writers (to be cited later) the middle school was to be an innovative institution in which mixed ability teaching would have a prominent place. This advocacy of mixed ability teaching seems to reveal an underlying desire to bring about egalitarian reform.

Note 4

In the preamble to his study, Ball notes the domination of meritocratic concerns in official views of comprehensive schooling. In the study of Beachside, Ball reveals the influence of meritocratic ideology on the curriculum and organisation of a single comprehensive school.

Note 5

It is not suggested here that the contemporary primary school is characterised solely by progressive practices or the secondary school solely by traditional. Progressive and traditional approaches to schooling may influence to some degree the curriculum and organisation of both primary and secondary schools. What is being claimed is that in any school a particular type of curriculum, organisation and pedagogy could be expected to be dominant and will have ideological roots which may be located in a particular tradition of schooling.

Blyth (1965) has identified two traditions of primary education, the Traditional and Progressive or Development tradition. These are of course ideal types and as such are analytical constructs. Any school may be expected to exhibit elements of both traditions. However, the ethos of a particular school will reveal dominant influences. A school influenced by the Traditional tradition would be characterised by features surviving from elementary schooling. Such features would be manifest in a curriculum and organisation which stressed acquisition of basic skills, authoritarianism, competition, selective ability grouping, teacher centred learning and sanctions based on punishment rather than reward. In contrast, a school influenced by the Progressive or Developmental tradition would tend to have a curriculum and organisation

which stressed child centred learning, sanctions based on reward rather than punishment and an underlying principle of equality of treatment in which each child was provided with as many educational experiences as possible.

Secondary school influences stem from the Grammar School and Secondary Modern traditions (Musgrove 1972). The Grammar School tradition stresses maximisation of talent, the creation of an intellectual elite by the adoption of a curriculum and mode of organisation facilitating subject specialism and ability grouping. The secondary modern school, which had descended from the upper age levels of the elementary school, initially had progressive intentions. These intentions quickly gave way to the traditional academic concerns and academic aims and curriculum (albeit a watered down version) were adopted from the Grammar School. The academic pretensions of the secondary modern school inevitably led to streaming.

As stated earlier, it would be misleading to think of primary schools as wholly progressive or secondary schools as wholly traditional. Recently, A Hargreaves (1985) has shown that traditional secondary influences such as selective ability grouping may be more common in the last two years of the middle school than they are in the first two years of 11-16 and 11-18 secondary schools. Ball (1981) discovered the egalitarian, progressive, child centred intentions of a comprehensive school English department.

The policy intentions contained in early middle school ideology created by Plowden are strongly influenced by the Progressive tradition of English primary education. This study will aim to show to what extent this ideology is influential on the curriculum and organisation of one middle school.

Note 6

A school adopting mixed ability teaching may, however, be stating an egalitarian policy intention. The fact that differentiation and unequal treatment of pupils takes place within the mixed ability classroom must be considered as an unintended outcome.

CHAPTER 2

Teachers' Perceptions of their Pupils

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The evidence in the previous chapter showed the extent of setting in 9-13 middle schools. The widespread nature of ability grouping practices was taken as an indication of secondary practice in middle schools, and its popularity as a mode of organization was taken as confirmation that the gulf between the 'ideal' middle school and the actual middle school is in reality considerable. Emerging from evidence gleaned from large scale surveys (Taylor and Garson 1982, HMI 1983) it is now evident that the majority of 9-13 middle schools have evolved not an egalitarian curriculum involving delayed decisions and integration consistent with notions of the 'ideal' middle school but a differentiated curriculum which has its emphasis on early selection and subject specialism. However, national surveys tell us how middle schools are. They do not tell us how they came to be this way. We understand from the surveys that middle schools are preoccupied with selection processes, but we are not informed of the social processes which attend this selection or the consequences of selection for pupils.

Since, as was suggested in Chapter 1, the middle school is an agency for selection, then the role of the middle school teacher as evaluator/select- or must be prominent. Hammersley defines selection as:

'By selection I mean the allocation of pupils to categories receiving differential treatment, whether within the same school class or by means of distribution to different classes or different schools which results in differential life chances via the award of credentials that determine school leavers' positions on the labour market.' (Hammersley 1977, p 9)

On this basis, two kinds of selection are possible within the middle school: 1-where the middle school teacher may be involved in selection processes at the classroom level, where pupils are differentiated within a class, and 2-at the school level where differentiation is formalised in the setting system. The early and classic studies of the differentiation process in the secondary modern school (Hargreaves 1967) and the grammar school (Lacey 1970) both show how organisation of the school (stressing differentiation by allocating pupils to streams) has unintended consequences for social relationships and pupil careers.

An analysis of the differentiation process at classroom or school level may start with consideration of actors' perspectives. Studies of differentiation processes in schools have traditionally examined the perspectives of the actors (teachers) engaged in that process. Perception itself involves differentiation and categorisation, for in order for an actor (teacher) to make sense of his world, objects (people and things) must be categorised. The function of these categories is to 'reduce the range of information sources that have to be scanned and to reduce the amount of interpretive work that has to be done on any occasion before we can act' (Hammersley 1977, p 101). Reduction of 'the amount of interpretive work which has to be done' is a prime concern of teachers. For as D Hargreaves and his colleagues (1975) have noted, teachers categorise pupils because of their large numbers. In both primary and secondary schools (particularly secondary schools) teachers are confronted with large, and in the case of secondary schools, constantly changing classes. The objects or elements teachers most frequently differentiate, in their professional roles, are pupils. In order for teachers to make sense of the classroom world these elements (pupils) require categorisation. Exactly how pupils are categorised is dependent on teacher perspectives. These perspectives form a screen through which reality is filtered and reassembled, and are constructed from two components, the

paradigmatic component which embodies theoretical ideas of education, perhaps derived from professional training, and the pragmatic component which is derived from previous classroom experiences as a teacher. (Hammersley 1977). Perspectives then are composed of sets of assumptions about the theoretical and real worlds of education and are products of social interaction. As the differentiation process involves interaction, then the key to understanding the social interaction lies in examination of teacher perspectives. Exactly how teachers perceive their pupils will rely on both paradigmatic and pragmatic considerations.

The classroom work of teachers is a constrained activity, the constraints of 'space, physical properties, time, knowledge, power, clientele and accountability are all evident' (Woods 1983, p 50). For Woods (1983), Lortie (1975) and Bird (1980), the problem of teacher-pupil ratio caused by mass schooling in the secondary sector places severe constraints on teacher action. The teachers' considerations of exactly how to match knowledge (curricular content) with clientele (pupils with different abilities) was studied by Keddie (1971).

In her study, Keddie saw the matching of curricular content and pedagogic styles to the pupils of the C stream to provide problems for the teachers. The pragmatic complexities inherent in the teaching process can, however, be alleviated to an extent by the teachers' creativity. Coping strategies (A Hargreaves 1978) are developed by teachers to cope with the dilemmas they face daily in the school. Strategies adopted by teachers to cope with their problems are described by A Hargreaves as 'meaningful responses to experienced problems, constraints and dilemmas' (Hargreaves 1978 p 75). However, the 'meaningful responses' to solve dilemmas may replace the educative function.¹ The plight and apparent helplessness of teachers is poetically noted by Woods: '. . . my analysis of the constraints on teachers portrays them in the ever tightening grip

of a powerful pincer movement, with "professional demands" on one side, and "recalcitrant material" in the form of reluctant or resentful pupils on the other, with shrinking aid or the ability to resist either. In the crush, the kernel of their real job, teaching, is lost, and only the cracked shell of their personal defences remains. Teachers labour to piece it together, and as is the nature of repaired shells, it can appear deceptively full.' (Woods 1979, p 141)

Teachers may solve some of the dilemmas of classroom life by creating typifications of their pupils, and these typifications may be a product of both the teaching paradigm and the practical circumstances in which teachers must operate: 'these typifications make sense of pupil behaviour and facilitate "teaching"' (Hammersley 1977 p 101). Teacher typifications of pupils may, perhaps, enable the teacher to both explain and predict the behaviour and performance of pupils.

Research concerned with teacher typification of pupils has relied on two theoretical models, the ideal matching model, and the characteristics model (D Hargreaves 1977). Early work by Becker (1952) shows teachers to have the same problem as other service occupation workers in their dealings with clients. To resolve problems of dealing with large numbers of clients, Becker suggests that teachers have developed an image of the ideal client (ideal pupil). The teacher is seen to hold an image of the ideal pupil, against which actual pupils are matched, matching results in some pupils who conform closely to the ideal type being categorised 'good' and others not conforming to this ideal type being categorised 'bad'. Ideal matching is seen to solve three problems teachers face daily in the classroom: the problem of teaching itself, the problem of discipline, and the problem of the moral acceptability of the pupils. The central task for the teachers in Keddie's study (Keddie 1971) was

matching curriculum content and pedagogic styles to the perceived ability of the pupils. In executing this task, problems were created by pupils of the C stream. Whilst A stream pupils were like teacher, C stream pupils were unlike teacher and disrupted teacher intentions. As

Keddie reports:

'Teaching A stream pupils seems to be relatively unproblematic for teachers: they take the activities in their classrooms for granted, they rarely make explicit the criteria which guide the preparation and presentation of teaching material for these pupils, and what counts as knowledge is left implicit and apparently consensual.'

(Keddie 1971, p 134)

However, with pupils of the C stream, these 'pupils disrupt teachers' expectations and violate their norms of appropriate social, moral and intellectual pupil behaviour' (Keddie 1971, p 134). Becker's concept of 'ideal client' is seen clearly in these examples, with the A stream pupils conforming closely to the image of the 'ideal pupil', and pupils adopting teachers' definitions of the situation are likely to be placed in top streams.

The characteristics model of typification which is derived from attitude measurement studies sees the teachers as evaluating pupils by having a bundle of characteristics. Pupils are categorised and 'actual . . . pupils are typified as a unique configuration of such characteristics and these typifications are constructed in the form of an identikit' (D Hargreaves 1977, p 275).

There would seem to be little difference between the two models of typification, for both depend on the teacher evaluating pupils against some list of attributes of personality and intelligence which are afforded significance by the teacher. An image of the 'ideal pupil' will obviously be composed of a number of constructs or pupil characteristics.

Both the ideal matching model and the characteristics model arise from labelling theory. The application of labelling theory to school processes has been in the area of deviance in schools. Using this theoretical perspective pupils who disrupt teachers' plans are defined by teachers as deviant. Previous psychometric studies of deviance merely contributed to the personalisation of failure in explanations of educability. Labelling theory provides an alternative perspective. It has as its prime focus the rule makers rather than the rule breakers. Since for the interactionist, deviance is a social process, it may be conceived as a process by which the members of a group, community or society (1) interpret behaviour as deviant (2) define persons who so behave as deviant and (3) accord them the treatment considered appropriate to such deviants' (Kitsuse 1962, in Hargreaves, Hestor and Mellor 1975, p4).

In Becker's application of labelling theory to educational settings, we are alerted to the relationship between the typification of pupils and the dilemmas faced by the teacher. Usually the most powerful definition of reality in the classroom is the teacher's, and teachers structure the rules for social interaction in the classroom. A teacher's view of the 'good' or 'bad' pupil will be shaped by evaluating the characteristics of the actual pupil, not only against the ideal type but also against classroom rules. 'A certain kind of pupil is ideal, not simply because he matches the conception of pupil embedded in a teaching paradigm, but also because his actions "gear" into the plans the teacher has developed for dealing with the particular circumstances he faces.' (Hammersley 1977, p 101)

This conception of deviance underlines the power of teachers' definitions of situations. Teachers create the contextual rules of the classroom, they evaluate pupil behaviour with regard to these rules and also images

of the ideal pupil, and allocate deviant pupils to ameliorative programmes. These may be the early stages of deviant pupil careers. The concentration on rule makers and the consequences for rule infraction is evident in the Cicourel and Kitsuse study of 1968 which was concerned with the 'social processes whereby adolescents come to be defined and classified as "social types"' (in Hargreaves, Hestor and Mellor, 1975, p 18). Teachers in this study categorised adolescent problems in three ways: (1) Academic activities (2) Infractions of rules of conduct (3) Emotional problems. Typing students in these three ways provided the basis for three possible student careers within the school: academic, delinquent and clinical. It was a central concern of the Cicourel and Kitsuse paper to analyse the 'interpretive rules utilised by the organisational personnel who decide what forms of behaviour and what kinds of evidence warrant actions which define individuals as deviant within the system' (Cicourel and Kitsuse 1968, in Hargreaves, Hestor and Mellor 1975, p 18. This study has been criticised for its sketchiness (Hargreaves, Hestor and Mellor 1975) and lack of extensive quotation from members' accounts and failure to inform us of how teachers routinely define pupils or pupils' acts as deviant during lessons. This shortcoming, the failure adequately to categorise the implementation of interpretive rules at the classroom level, is more than compensated for in the exhaustive phenomenological work of the authors of the critique in their description of contextual rules.

The importance of teacher perspectives in the differentiation process has been reiterated by more recent research - Leiter 1976, King 1978, Nash 1973, Sharp and Green 1975, Ball 1981, Woods 1979. Leiter describes his kindergarten teachers as differentiating pupils for allocation in a tracking system by the creation of social types. Pupils were categorised as - immature child, bright student, behaviour problem, and independent

worker. These social types are seen to arise from the social setting of the classroom and also to organise that setting, as Leiter explains:

'The teachers' accounts demonstrate that the social types are embedded within the setting and at the same time organise the setting through their use by the teacher to recognise and interpret the students' behaviour in particular ways.'

(Leiter 1976, p 125)

Sharp and Green (1975) in their investigation of the progressive primary classroom found teachers to typify pupils according to degrees of conformity to the classroom regime. The teachers' central construct is the construct of 'busyness', and pupils are evaluated in terms of their conformity to this central feature of classroom organisation. Sharp and Green note a paradox in the way teachers perceive their pupils. As progressive teachers they are aware of the dangers of premature labelling, yet in reality the researchers found the teachers to have stable and hard typifications of some pupils. Having typed some pupils as successful, these pupils are then afforded differential treatment in the form of increased opportunity for interaction with teachers. An inconsistency between the paradigmatic and pragmatic components of teacher perspectives is also noted by Keddie (1971) who describes the views presented to her in the educationist context by the teachers studied to be in stark contrast to those views and actions presented in the teacher context. Sharp and Green conclude that inconsistency between teacher talk and teacher action must be the result of not only institutional forces but also societal forces. Sharp and Green collected the data as phenomenologists and analysed and interpreted ^{them} / as Marxists. The result is a 'soft determinist' description and explanation of the processes of progressive primary education. In a detailed examination of the apparent inconsistencies in teacher accounts presented in the Sharp and Green study, Hammersley (1977) invokes Schutz to claim that to be inconsistent is part of being human, and he points to the normality of inconsistency in perspective as being perhaps an important indicator of

the dilemmas faced by teachers. Inconsistency in perspective which so alarmed Sharp and Green could, it is claimed by Hammersley, merely be a fault in research technique (participant observation and non directive interview). Sharp and Green did not saturate categories or penetrate meanings by asking teachers what they meant by 'busyness', 'readiness', 'independent worker' etc. Or it could be faulty interpretation by the researchers. Certainly Hammersley's detailed treatment of the teacher accounts elicited by Sharp and Green show alleged inconsistencies not to be inconsistent at all! The fact that the same data can be construed differently by independent researchers must alert us to the problems inherent in the interpretation stage.

(1973)

Nash/discovered that the teachers in his study held constructs for pupil typification which were consistent with the progressive primary school classroom regime. The core constructs elicited from his teachers described attributes of personality rather than attributes of intelligence. Core constructs used by Nash's teachers for differentiation of pupils were the dyadic contrasts of hardworking - lazy, mature - immature, and well behaved - poorly behaved. Nash saw use of these construct types as entirely consistent with a progressive child-centred approach which emphasised personality attributes as just as important as academic ability for 'good' progress in school.

The dislocation between paradigmatic concerns and pragmatic concerns noted by Sharp and Green and Keddie is not evident in the Nash study. For Nash, the paradigmatic component (although this is unexplored, we hear only that the teachers taught in 'progressive' primary schools) and pragmatic component of teacher perspectives were as one. Both determine the image of the ideal pupil, both structure classroom contextual rules, and congruence between them results in a typification of

pupils consistent with the ethos of the school. Both accounts, however, (particularly Sharp and Green's) relate the typification process to the pragmatic concerns of teachers.

The relationship between teacher typification of pupils and classroom rules is further underlined by King (1980). King found processes of typification to be inseparable from those of assessing work and behaviour in children:

'Typification, assessment, teaching, learning, controlling and being controlled were all aspects of the same flow of action and interaction in the classroom and were consonant with the teachers' recipe ideologies, particularly those of development and individuality.'
(King 1981, p 113)

King also records that as classroom regimes vary between teachers, so also do teacher perspectives and therefore typifications of pupils. This feature is also noted by Ball (1981) who found that construct types elicited from teachers vary between subjects, not only in the type of construct but also in the number used by different teachers to differentiate pupils of the same class. Ball also reinforces the idea that conformity to classroom rules is the basis for typification. He describes how one boy's recent academic improvement in terms of class position (to become 6th in the class after termly examinations) is overlooked by a teacher who relies on social knowledge of the boy in the classroom:

'Max Vassart came 6th in the end of year examinations, he occupies the 32nd and 21st positions in the rank order of perceptions. He was frequently "in trouble", as we have seen, and was frequently an initiator of disruption in lessons. Thus his relatively high level of academic achievement is completely overshadowed in his teachers' perceptions of him by his behaviour in lessons and his attitude to school.'
(Ball 1981, p 76)

Ball's multiple methodology and sophistication in marrying qualitative and quantitative data in producing an ethnography of the comprehensive school goes far beyond the simplistic methods of Nash. Nash's reliance upon repertory grid data and observation provide an impoverished descr-

ption of the social processes involved in the differentiation of pupils by teachers.

The studies cited so far have attempted to explain the ways in which teachers typify pupils and how this typification is both embedded in and facilitates the practicalities of teaching. But what of the consequences of this typification for the pupils? From the earliest studies (Becker 1952) attempts have been made to link typification processes with the maintenance of social structure. Sharp and Green (1975) in exploring the link between classroom experiences and social structure hint that differentiation in the classroom may have serious implications for the distribution of life chances. The subtlety with which the pupils in the Sharp and Green study are differentiated is in marked contrast with the methods noted by Rist. Rist (1970) in his study of the kindergarten classroom shows how the teachers differentiating pupils, using characteristics related to social class, produced a social stratification with the hierarchical categorisation of pupils within the classroom which directly mirrored social structure in the wider society. This crude categorisation employed criteria for differentiation from cultural clues exhibited by pupils - clothing, smell, skin colour, ease of interaction with teacher, language use, and a series of social factors obtained from pupils' record cards. Rist describes a social process 'whereby out of a large group of children and an adult unknown to one another prior to the beginning of the school year, there emerge patterns of behaviour, expectations and performance, and a mutually accepted stratification system delineating those doing well from those doing poorly.' (Rist 1970, pp 412-413) It is Rist's intention that the reader imagines (for he provides no evidence for this) that the clowns, tigers and Cardinals are fed differentially into the labour market on the termination of schooling. It is Rist's contention that a 'caste'

system within the classroom appears to emerge in the wider society as a 'class system' and that 'the public school system not only mirrors the configurations of the larger society but also significantly contributes to maintaining them' (Rist 1970, pp 448-449).

The relationship between student typification and social class is further explored by Cicourel and Kitsuse in their study of allocation of High School students to pre-college courses. They show that students are differentiated by counsellors who utilise supposed 'ability' constructs to allocate students. Despite the allocation of students on the basis of claimed 'ability' criteria, the counsellors are seen to allocate on the basis of social knowledge, where student performance is an assumed indicator of 'ability'. This procedure is strongly linked to social class, and the counsellors in their 'gate-keeping' role allocate students to different pre-college courses and thereby different life chances. From this study, we see the counsellors' reifications of students contributing to the maintenance of a class stratified society. Cicourel and Kitsuse's forging of the link between the typification process, and the differential distribution of life chances is more convincing than the attempt provided by Rist, for the students in this study are located somewhat nearer to the labour market. Distribution to a pre-college course conceivably has more impact on life chances than allocation to a defined and socially constructed sector of the kindergarten classroom. However, the link between school differentiation processes and differential life chances is relatively unexplored in this study, and its status as a causal explanation must be questioned. The authors do not adequately demonstrate the link between school and society; the causal link between the labelling process and the consequences for those labelled is not fully forged. We learn little of the extent to which labels are internalised by deviants, or their subsequent fate in the labour market.

Studies of the typification process which are allegedly interactionist in nature have recently come under attack (D Hargreaves 1977) and the Nash study (1973) is singled out for close scrutiny. Nash's use of observation and the Kelly Repertory Grid Technique is, Hargreaves explains, only superficially interactionist in orientation because, although Nash elicits members' own constructs, observation (of classroom contexts) does not generate more adequate models. The model produced by Nash is therefore merely an eclectic version of previous ideal matching and characteristics models. For Hargreaves, the ideal matching and characteristics models are inadequate in three main ways: they do not take account of the changes in typifications over time or in different contexts, the meanings of the constructs elicited is not clear, and the constructs elicited from the teacher by the researcher merely have the status of third party talk, and therefore provide little insight into interaction processes in the classroom. Hargreaves proposes a new model to go some way towards ameliorating these shortcomings. The new model, the dynamic interactionist model, would have as its central concern the dynamic nature of the typification. Following detailed phenomenological school study of the secondary/ (Hargreaves, Hestor and Mellor 1975) Hargreaves proposes three stages in typification: speculation, in which a teacher makes initial and tentative typifications of the pupil, elaboration, in which attempts are made by the teacher to verify the initial speculative typification, and stabilisation, a final stage, in which the teacher has a stable conception of the identity of the pupil. Consideration of these stages may assist the researcher in checking changed typifications over time, and specifying physical, pedagogic and curricular contexts during the elicitation stage will check for changed typifications with changing contexts. Being aware of changed typifications in time and context would require relatively small changes to existing methodology. However, to penetrate the meanings of constructs and elevate them to a

status more than mere third party talk would involve 'great ingenuity ... (and) new research methods which will allow us to get closer to the we - relation of direct interaction between teachers and pupils in the classroom' (D Hargreaves 1977, p 282).

On the first element of the critique of existing models, Hargreaves is clear, and can proffer remedies in the form of his dynamic model. On the remaining two he is less clear, and we are left doubting the exact status of teacher constructs.

A dynamic interactionist model of typification is complex, and states that teachers reach hard and stable typifications over long periods of interaction with pupils. It is strange that this model should be generated from research concerned with the perspectives of teachers in secondary schools where, as has already been mentioned (Woods and Lortie), teachers face the pressures of mass schooling: large and constantly changing classes. The latter pressure is not experienced by primary teachers who have long periods of time with their classes. The dynamic interactionist model, therefore, could be expected to be more typical of primary school classrooms. The work of Bird (1980) has shown that behavioural labels are not easily internalised by pupils in the comprehensive school, because of lack of consistency of labelling (an individual pupil will encounter several teachers during the course of a school day), whereas academic labels are readily accepted and internalised by pupils. The result of this process is institutionalised labelling. A model which accommodates such a process is preferred by Woods (1983) which he terms the static stereotypical model, in which differentiation is restricted to 'speculation' based on stereotypes. Elaborate typifications may then, at the secondary school stage, be impossible (for the majority of pupils), and pupil identity gives way to

stream or band identity. (See Ball 1981)

The studies of the differentiation process which have been discussed here raise important questions about current differentiation practices both informal (within the classroom) and formal (at the institutional level: setting, streaming, banding, option choices etc). These questions have a particular pertinence for the middle school, an area of relative neglect by writers of ethnographies and case studies.

Future interpretive work concerned with the differentiation process in 9-13 middle schools would perhaps consider some of the following questions:

Do teachers' typifications of their pupils change with different contexts?

Is the typification process different at different stages?

(Middle schools contain features of primary and secondary education.)

Is typification in the middle school consistent with the dynamic interactionist model or the static stereotypical model?

What meanings do teachers attach to the differentiation process?

How do teachers differentiate?

What criteria are being employed for differentiation?

What are the consequences of the differentiation process for the pupils?

Does the differentiation process as an ameliorative measure amplify those pupil behaviours it is intended to eradicate?

The following chapters will consider data collected in a 9-13 middle school which will serve to illuminate some of the problems raised here.

NOTESNote 1

Although coping strategies are not necessarily anti-educational, they may become taken for granted not as a version of teaching but as teaching itself. If the constraints on teachers are many, then survival goals may replace educational goals.

CHAPTER 3

Midway Middle School: Its origins and organisation

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Midway Middle School: Its origins and organisation

Origins

Midway Middle School lies on the perimeter of a Midlands industrial city. The catchment area of the school is bisected by the ring road for the city. The buildings were opened in 1953 as the first secondary modern in the city to be built after the war and as such are typical of the building style of the period. The school buildings comprise: assembly hall, separate dining space, gymnasium, library, science laboratory, woodcraft room, needlecraft room, art room and home economics room. There are fourteen other teaching rooms, many of which are specialist teaching areas. The school is surrounded by extensive grounds which provide football pitches, hockey pitches, athletics track and six tennis courts. The entrance to the school has a pleasant display of trees, shrubs and flower borders. The layout of the school is typical of a secondary school: each specialist room and classroom is large enough to accommodate approximately thirty pupils, and the rooms line wide corridors which facilitate the mass movement of pupils who spill out onto them every forty minutes when the school bell rings for lesson change. Building programmes proposed in 1973 to create year areas with large teaching areas and adjoining bays have never been implemented. Midway is a 9-13 middle school with approximately 480 pupils on roll, and is therefore a four form entry school. The school locally enjoys a reputation as a good school which offers a traditional education.

Midway Secondary Modern School became Midway 9-13 Middle School as a

result of comprehensivisation in 1975. Not only did the newly emergent middle school inherit the secondary modern buildings but also its staff. On my arrival at the school in 1981 as the newly appointed science coordinator, my predecessor, Mr Lambert, explained to me that:

'We were lucky here, we had staff from the Secondary Modern and discipline is good.'

Mr Lambert - former science coordinator

And to further underline the importance of discipline in the school he said:

'I've ruled with a rod of iron here, I had to, to survive.'

Mr Lambert - former science coordinator

Mr Lambert, like all of his colleagues faced with reorganisation in 1975, chose to remain at the school. The headmaster, who has been at the school since 1973, explained to me in interview that:

'No one in the old secondary school wanted to leave, there were one or two who thought they wanted to leave. Your predecessor always thought he wanted to leave, he always thought he wanted to go into a senior school. I did advise him that he wouldn't get a job as head of department, he might find himself taking the fourth year who perhaps most people didn't want. Plus the fact I didn't know if he was properly equipped to deal with a comprehensive intake, a comprehensive range of children at that level.'

Headmaster

The headmaster here neatly summarises the three main considerations which his staff faced at the time of reorganisation: fear of loss of status, fear of 'dirty work', and lack of expertise in teaching the upper ability range. Fearing the same kind of fate as Riseborough's (1981) teachers, the staff at Midway Secondary Modern chose to remain and be the first staff of Midway Middle. The plight of the staff at this time was reiterated and personalised by the present Maths coordin-

ator who has been at the school for twenty years:

'When we became middle I had the chance of going off to one of the secondary schools, keeping my salary but probably not position, and probably getting teaching other than the teaching I would have liked. So I decided to stay here as did the majority of the staff, to keep their positions.'

Maths coordinator

The plight of the secondary modern staff was quickly realised by a few incoming staff. The second year leader who has spent the past nine years at the school explained:

'When I came here there were a lot of staff left here from its secondary days. There were the Freds and people and so on and so forth. I know Bob made a positive commitment to changing to a middle school but I wonder how many of them stayed because career wise they were heads of department and if they had gone to upper schools they would have lost that status. A lot were nearing retirement and didn't want to change and I think we took a lot of our Secondary organisation to the Middle School because of the staff who were here and it's still with us.'

Second Year Leader

A Hargreaves (1985) has also found that the ex secondary modern teachers in his study were more committed to staying out of the secondary (13-18) school than to joining the middle school.

It is suggested here that for some of the teachers at Midway Secondary Modern at that time there was little commitment to the philosophy of the middle school and little desire to innovate. The secondary modern teachers could 'coast out' to retirement, protect status and avoid 'dirty work'. This situation persisted for almost a decade. When in interview the headmaster was asked about the philosophy of the middle school, he

replied as follows:

'We were finding our philosophy as we were finding our staff. If we began the school about 1973, the first positive moves, I think it would be fair to say there, would have been a Secondary predominance for the next seven or eight years. It was when we started recruiting for the first year (team) we went in for new members of staff, for people with Primary experience.'

Headmaster

The recent period of change, which occurred at about 1980-81 and involved the retirement of the old Secondary Modern staff and the recruitment of Primary and Middle School trained teachers, far from being welcomed by the headmaster is seen pessimistically. In the school self evaluation document of 1982 the headmaster viewed the past with nostalgia and the future with doubt:

'Midway got off to a fine start as a Middle School and this was due to the excellence of its staff. Apart from their professional approach they brought many years of experience to bear. Many of them had built up a profound knowledge of the school and the families. Older brothers and sisters and increasingly Mums and Dads had been taught by them and this familiarity encouraged a trust and reliability which served both groups well. I have said before that I believe 'relationships' are the key factor in schools and these teachers had created the right sort of atmosphere over the years. It was with regret that we said farewell to some of these stalwarts, and their replacements, and I say this with no disrespect, no doubt found it difficult to fill the gaps. You cannot build up strong relationships overnight and so inevitably we lost somewhat in this respect. Seven heads of department were replaced in this period of change.'

Headmaster

Given that the new Middle School inherited its buildings, equipment and staff uncommitted to the philosophy of the Middle School, it would not be surprising if the organisation of the school in the first few years of its life resembled that of the previous school. In the Secondary Modern, pupils were streamed throughout in GCE, CSE, and non-examination streams, and the curriculum was organised around subject specialism. In the first six years of the Middle School this organisation was mirrored: the pupils were still streamed by ability and offered a traditional curriculum. For the past four years registration groups have been mixed ability but subjects have been taught in setted groups. The reasons for the change to mixed ability registration groups were that teachers who had pastoral responsibility for low ability registration groups found it difficult to cope during registration and the weekly form period. Also there were growing disciplinary problems with the lower streams throughout the school.

'In the late seventies we had great behavioural problems. When I look at the seventy five, seventy six punishment book there are lists of those who came up about stupid things around the school, some of them quite serious. This has definitely dropped off.'

Deputy Headmaster

The streaming of the Secondary Modern pupils was part of the meritocratic tradition of secondary modern education. An attempt to preserve a diluted grammar school type emphasis on academic excellence resulted in a small number of pupils 'staying on' (the leaving age was then fifteen) to take a handful of 'O' levels. The present Maths coordinator remembers from his time in the Secondary Modern the level reached by a small minority of the pupils:

'The top group in the fifth year, if they stayed on, tended to be considerably smaller, anything from twelve to twenty, I suppose, stayed on in the brightest class. They took GCE in a range of

subjects, they may have taken only four or five, not the usual eight they may have done at Grammar School. One or two did extremely well. In fact one particular boy I remember who failed the 11+ stayed on here and got his 'O' level Maths and later got an Honours degree in Mathematics.'

Maths Coordinator

Enduring concern for the identification and promotion of talented pupils via a streaming system ensured the persistence of streaming in the early years of the Middle School. The recent change from streaming to setting is, however, hardly a radical move, and the organisation of the school at present still reflects its Secondary Modern past. I will now examine some of the factors which may account for the maintenance of the secondary modern tradition in the comprehensive Middle School.

Intake

The perception of some of the staff, particularly key reality definers, have of the pupils entering the school may well owe something to its secondary modern past. The headmaster and deputy headmaster frequently refer to the composition of the intake. Those pupils living inside the boundary formed by the ring road live in an area of predominantly owner-occupied housing, in a suburb to the city called Middleton. Those pupils living outside the ring road live in an area of predominantly rented council housing which forms a large council estate called Brookway. Midway is served by four feeder first schools, St James and The Glebe in Middleton, and Brookway Road and Sycamore Street in Brookway. Brookway Road First School is designated EPA. Normally, of the 480 pupils attending Midway Middle School, 60% are from Brookway Estate and 40% from the suburb of Middleton. When the school was a Secondary Modern, nearly the whole of the intake came from Brookway Estate, and memories of these

pupils may be associated, for some of the staff, with experiences of schooling in Brookway Secondary Modern. When the school became a Middle School, this ensured a larger proportion of pupils from Middleton entering the school. The headmaster in interview and casual conversation referred to the difficulties which used to, and his opinion still, persist on the Estate, and proffered Plowdenesque theories of cultural deprivation:

'The children came from a very wide range of homes bringing with them the full ability range and those with the experiences of exciting stimulating things, and others alas whose interest had to be stimulated at school.'

Headmaster

In interview, the headmaster relived the hopes of the mid seventies when children from Middleton entered the school:

'We always had some children who came from outside the Estate, but when you were getting nearly 50% of them I think it altered the whole formation and ethos of the school.'

Headmaster

If the influx of middle class pupils from Middleton raised the hopes of the headmaster and staff, then what was wrong with the children from the Estate?

The headmaster clearly perceives the influx of Middleton pupils to mean an influx of intelligent and well behaved pupils. It is implicit in this that these qualities are lacking in pupils from the Estate.

'With the change from the Secondary Modern to the comprehensive pupil you had greater intelligence, a more mature approach.'

'This may be because we've got such a difficult fourth year at the moment. It may be due to the fact that 72% of them come from the

Estate. I sound as though I'm denigrating the Estate, but one has got to be realistic about it. I think children pick up their ideas from others around them and they saw that certain things weren't done, so they stopped doing them. I also think that when children leave here and go off the Estate (to the Upper School in Middleton) at the age of thirteen, it's good for these children. It may break down local connections and the neighbourhood school, but I'm sure it gives them an insight into the ways in which other children behave and work and live, and make one or two think about themselves, and maybe that's not a bad thing.'

Headmaster

The headmaster's poor view of the Estate children, and ^{his} perception of Middleton children as being some kind of civilising influence was often reinforced by the deputy headmaster. The deputy once taught in a large Primary School in the city which had an intake of 100% council estate children. Many of his staffroom stories entail accounts of the horrors of his previous appointment, and how lucky the staff at Midway are to have almost 50% of the pupils coming from good home backgrounds.

Each summer term when the former first year leader (now second year leader) visited the children in First Schools, prior to their arrival at Midway in September, she also reported horror stories. These stories emanated from the First Schools on the Estate, and little was said of pupils in the two Middleton First Schools. Of one visit to Brookway Road, the EPA school, the first year leader reported indiscipline and low standards:

'When I went round the First Schools the response I got at Brookway Road absolutely horrified me. I couldn't get the kids quiet for more than half a minute. I was just left with fifty kids in a small room. I couldn't get them quiet. I couldn't say what I'd come to say. If

I'd been here I would have had them out of the door and we'd have been in and out until I'd got them, some semblance of listening. It was just a petrifying sort of atmosphere down there.'

Former First Year Leader, now Second Year Leader
And of a similar experience at Sycamore Street:

'When I went to Sycamore Street, much the same thing, although it was slightly more explainable because they had a teacher the year before who had had problems with them, and the woman who'd picked them up had taken them a long way along, but they weren't where she wanted to get them.'

Former First Year Leader, now Second Year Leader
Following these visits, the first year leader had enlisted the support of the headmaster, deputy headmaster, social worker and educational psychologist to settle down the new intake, or that fraction of it which came from the Estate. In her own words, she had adopted an 'iron hand in velvet glove policy'.

Other staff also complained about Estate children. One first year teacher when asked about how she found her new class replied:

'The First Schools are not accurate in describing children.

Children described by St James as average are streets ahead of those described by Brookway Road as average.'

First Year Class Teacher

Another first year class teacher mentioned a First School in conversation without naming it. It was implicit here that because of my experience as a teacher at Midway I would readily recognise which First School she was talking about.

'They come up from their First Schools with such differing levels on their Maths. There's one school, naming no names, where children come to us with a very poor background in Maths.'

First Year Class Teacher

The First School mentioned here was in fact Brookway Road.

These comments give some indication of the perceptions that some of the members of staff at Midway have of Estate and Middleton pupils. Such perceptions reveal a reified image of the Estate child: he is culturally deprived because of supposed unsatisfactory primary socialisation, and poorly educated because of unsatisfactory First School experiences. Staff attitudes about the Estate seem deeply ingrained. Two staffroom incidents will serve to show how these attitudes manifest themselves in the day-to-day interaction of Midway teachers.

In one incident, a teacher was reading aloud the address and message on a card pinned to the staffroom notice board. The card was from a grateful parent who thanked the school for her daughter Jane's good progress, and enclosed a cheque for the school fund. Another teacher, upon hearing Jane's address, expressed surprise that Jane had done so well since she was from the Estate. The headmaster, who had been listening to this conversation, quickly explained that Jane lived in Brookway Avenue, which was not in Brookway but actually in Middleton. The two teachers, having received this explanation, laughed nervously, and seemed relieved that they would not need to change their attitudes towards this particular pupil as she had been located safely on the favourable side of the ring road.

In another incident, teachers were reading a list of 'A' level results from the Upper School in Middleton to which most Midway pupils transfer, and spotting performances of former pupils. The name, Amanda Jones, was mentioned by a teacher, and it was noticed that Amanda had gained poor grades. The deputy headmaster who was watching this explained that Amanda had been a very able pupil at Midway and had been in all the top

sets, and that her father, Dr Jones (a family doctor in Middleton), had written a letter of complaint to the examination board, and that some mistake had obviously been made by the board when grading Amanda's papers. The teacher then mentioned another girl from the list who had been in the same sets as Amanda and had also not done well in her 'A' levels. The deputy headmaster quickly intervened at this point with:

'Oh, her, she's gone right off, never expected her to do very much at all.'

Deputy Headmaster

The second pupil was a girl from the Estate.

These examples show how the expectation of the Midway teachers may be shaped by the social knowledge they have of the pupils. The significance of this for the School will be discussed later.

Organisation

'The timetable should reflect the philosophy of the school.'

~~Former First Year Leader, now Second Year Leader~~

The first section of this chapter dealt with the origins of Midway Middle School and the perceptions of some of its staff about their pupils. This section will deal with the organisation of Midway Middle and staff perceptions of this organisation.

Early literature on middle schools suggested they would emerge as schools in which the best of primary practice would be preserved and extended upwards into the later years of the middle school and that the new schools would have a propensity towards mixed ability teaching. It was stressed in the literature that the transition from primary ways of working to secondary ways should be smooth and gradual. Elements of this model (a fusion of extension and transition models) exist in the stated

aims of Midway Middle School as expressed by some teachers, For example, the former first year leader, in explaining some of the functions of the first year in the Middle School, stated that:

'We're in a buffer zone between the First School where they had one teacher and we are breaking them into the idea of being taught by more than one teacher. The organisation of the first year is in many ways a staging post between the class based First School and that of the second, third and fourth years. Part of our teaching role must involve adapting the children to a more structured and rigid timetable and organisation.'

Former First Year Leader, now Second Year Leader

And in the same vein the Maths coordinator outlined perfectly the transitional model:

'It was certainly decided that throughout the school we should gradually develop from a junior approach to teaching in the first year to a secondary or upper school approach in the fourth year. That we should gradually give them some sort of transition from general subject teacher approach in the first year to a specialist and in many respects a secondary teaching situation in the fourth year.'

Maths Coordinator

How then is this stated philosophy of gradual transition reflected in the organisation of the school? Table (5) shows the amount of time per week each year spends with its class teacher (this is taken as an indication of generalist teaching) and how much time is spent with specialist teachers (an indication of specialist teaching).

TABLE (5) Time spent with class teacher. Time spent with specialist teacher

YEAR	TIME SPENT WITH CLASS TEACHER	TIME SPENT WITH SPECIALIST TEACHER
1	45%	55%
2	39%	61%
3	3%	97%
4	3%	97%

From this, two points emerge. Firstly, the fact that first year pupils spend 55% of their time with specialist teachers for Maths, Drama, Science, Art and Craft, PE, Swimming, Health and Music, destroys any notion of gradual transition between First School and Middle School. The pupils have in their First Schools been accustomed to one class teacher following an integrated curriculum.¹ Upon transfer to Midway, they are confronted with timetabled subjects which involve moving around the school, since the pupils are taught by nine different teachers.

Secondly, there is a marked stage between the second and third year from 39% generalist teaching to 3%. This again destroys any notion of gradual and smooth transition within Midway Middle. The marked change in pupil experience of the curriculum at the traditional 11+ divide is further underlined when the stages at which setting occurs are considered. This is shown in Table (6).

TABLE (6)

Subjects which are setted in each year

1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	4 th Year
Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths
		English	English
		Geography	Geography
		History	History
		PE	French
		French	Art/Craft
			PE
			Computer Studies
			Music
			Health
			Science
			RE

From this it can be seen that there is a marked step between year two and year three. This organisation then does not cater for a smooth and gradual transition, but offers abrupt changes for the pupils at the beginning of the first year and the beginning of the third year. The downward influence of setting (setting for Maths in years one and two), and the number of subjects timetabled for years one and two, show subject specialism to be a dominant force in the organisation of the curriculum. While it is true that the first and second year leaders have more opportunity to organise the curriculum and pastoral care systems for their years, subject coordinators assume much more responsibility for organisation in the third and fourth years.² The influence of the subject coordinators is also felt in years one and two owing to the extent of specialist teaching. With this arrangement a fragmented/^{year}system does not occur, rather a fragmented subject system. The former first year leader was alert to these inconsistencies when she posed the following questions in her self

evaluation:

'9+ children are not secondary and still need close contact with their class teacher. The middle school as we understand it was supposed to take the best of the primary school as well as the best of secondary. Have we? Should we have done more to take the best of primary method further up the school? There again, is it wanted or needed? We wondered if the current timetable moves are a conscious decision to parallel the first year with the rest of the school in a 'secondary' middle school. If such a radical change in philosophy, reflected in the timetable, has been or is being made, we wonder what our role is to be.'

Former First Year Leader, now Second Year Leader

Teacher Perspectives and Setting

These doubts about subject specialism in the first year were matched by teachers' doubts about setting throughout the school. Before considering some of the teachers' perceptions on the setting system, I will present the perspectives of three key reality definers in the school - the headmaster, deputy headmaster and Maths coordinator. The headmaster, who largely decides the mode of organisation of the school, revealed in interview that:

'One thing we have to bear in mind in this school is that there are certain parents who look to us to deliver the goods. There are those who keep a pretty tight eye on what we do academically, and I think it's very important for this school to have this element of children within, even if it does mean the parents looking over our shoulders from time to time. There are those parents who elected to send their children here because we have this setted system.'

Headmaster

The headmaster often expressed the need to attract this type of parent.

This type of parent was middle class and to be found in Middleton. The children of these parents would almost inevitably find themselves in top sets. It was clearly perceived by the headmaster that the professional and business people of Middleton would be attracted by his form of ability grouping. For the headmaster then, a visible pedagogy would ensure his average yearly intake of 40% Middleton children to be maintained. This perception lends some support to the Bernstein (1975) thesis that for 'old middle class' parents, and 'new middle class parents' with children of secondary age a visible pedagogy would have high appeal.

The deputy headmaster perceived the setting system to be advantageous to teachers, and in his own case:

'Setting is special to me because I have no doubt I am an old traditionalist, and the way I've been brought up I'd rather have thirty four of generally the same standard in the higher groups. I'm sure I move on these groups more because of the special structure.'

Deputy Headmaster

The deputy headmaster often talked of standards and the need to get the children up to the right standard. At the period of transition from streaming to setting, the deputy headmaster had been opposed to setting, and wanted to retain streaming. He thought setting was 'the thin end of the wedge' towards mixed ability teaching. Being totally opposed to mixed ability, he was happy to compromise and accept setting, as he perceived some form of hierarchical grouping by ability as 'the only way to teach'.

The perspective of the Maths coordinator contains elements seen in both the headmaster's and deputy headmaster's rationale for setting. It also contains a third element, pressure from the Upper Schools:

'The majority of staff like it (setting) as far as their subject is concerned. The subject teachers in the main go along with or state a preference for setted groups. The headmaster too is very keen to keep setted groups for the third and fourth years in particular. He feels the Upper Schools prefer to have the subjects taught separately. He feels and has always said because the parents and Upper Schools are happy with the sort of situation we have here at the moment.'

Maths Coordinator

The Maths coordinator at Midway is also responsible for planning the timetable. This is a key role in the school, for it is his task to enshrine in the form of a timetable the headmaster's educational philosophy. In doing this, he is aware of demands for changes in organisation which arise from the staff. Usually, requests for timetabling are made direct to him by subject coordinators or, in exceptional cases, year leaders, in the spring term. Any changes will be implemented in the following year. Major changes, such as a decision to abandon setting in favour of mixed ability in a particular subject, are discussed between him and the headmaster, with the headmaster having the final power of veto. Changes in organisation at Midway do not come about as a result of debate at staff meeting or policy committee: changes are proposed by individual members of staff usually via the Maths coordinator in his role as timetable compiler. Proposed changes may be accepted or rejected by the headmaster. The degree of consensus concerning school organisation suggested by the Maths coordinator is not reflected in statements made to me by teachers in interview. This is particularly so in the case of setting. There is indication in the perceptions of some of the teachers that perhaps rather more staff 'go along with' rather than 'state a preference for' setting.

The following quotations are from subject coordinators or year leaders, and provide a very different perspective to that presented by the headmaster, deputy headmaster and Maths coordinator.

The second year leader saw the presence of the secondary modern staff in the early years of the school as being a bar to innovation. However, her year staff at present seem to offer the possibility of change in English teaching in the second year.

'They were more secondary biased, to them it was the logical way. If you had a hundred and twenty kids and they were all being taught English at the same time, you divided them off and taught them in ability groups. Probably the team as it was when I went in had a more junior approach and could see no unsurmountable problem in having different ability bands within the class, and were quite happy to teach the same subject matter at three or four different levels, and make much more use of grouping within the class. We felt quite happy to teach mixed ability English.'

Second Year Leader

The senior mistress, who is also French coordinator, echoes this feeling, and extends it to the whole 9-13 age group:

'Personally in English at this age, I would have thought you could teach just as effectively in mixed ability groups.'

Senior Mistress

and also in other subjects:

'Humanities, I couldn't see why mixed ability wouldn't work with this age group.'

Senior Mistress

The senior mistress expressed anti setting views in interview but, despite her de jure authority in the school, seems powerless in implementing change:

'If I was in charge of organising it, I think I would think towards mixed ability generally, with selective setting in certain areas like Maths in the fourth year only.'

Senior Mistress

The lack of de facto authority of the senior mistress in middle schools has also been noted by A Hargreaves (1985) in his description of their domestic rather than management functions.

The Art teacher outlined a disadvantage of the setting system for her subject:

'The bottom sets are getting a raw deal because they are in such big groups of twenty four similar types. So they don't get any aspirations of higher. They don't get a chance of seeing children of better ability and how they perform. Therefore, the work for them is watered down.'

Art Teacher

The Geography teacher was unhappy about the mixed pattern of ability grouping in the third year, and expressed a desire for integration with History:

'I am unclear of the educational value in year three of the different (mixed ability) grouping for Science, RE, Music, with setting for History and Geography. Although I realise laboratory teaching restrictions and timetable constraints partly account for this, I personally would value mixed ability teaching in Geography, with more direct links with History. These are longer term issues which need full discussion.'

Geography Coordinator (self evaluation)

One reason for the dissatisfaction of these teachers with setting in their subjects is that pupils are allocated to a set for a particular subject using criteria from a different subject. A Hargreaves (1985) has devised three analytical categories of setting, each one characterised by its distinctive rationale. These are:

Principled setting: The cognitive demands of the subject are stressed. Teachers of subjects like Maths or French may claim them to be 'sequential' or 'linear' subjects.

Residual setting: For administrative convenience in timetabling, other subjects not held to be necessarily 'sequential' or 'linear' are also set.

Mismatch setting: Teachers who may lack or have poor qualifications in a subject may feel more confident teaching 'low ability' sets. At Midway, having decided to set in History and Geography, timetable constraints dictate that setting must also take place in subjects like French, Art and Craft, PE, etc. Therefore, since the initial allocation to the sets was made using Humanities criteria, these sets, transposed wholesale to French or any other subject, may not reflect a true spread of ability in that subject. This setting for administrative convenience, residual setting, was noticed by the French coordinator:

'I have said I don't need them set in the third year for French, but that's how they come to me, because of the way the timetable's structured. The setting is arranged for Humanities.'

Senior Mistress/French Coordinator

Education

The Physical/Department also receives fourth year pupils in sets which are based on the pupils' abilities in the Humanities. The PE coordinator finds himself in a paradoxical situation, for he advocated setting in academic subjects (which, for the convenience of timetabling, dictate setting in PE), but mixed ability in PE. In providing a rationale for mixed ability in his subject, he provided a similar argument to that of the

Art teacher:

'The present PE staff consider that, although there is a positive correlation between academic ability and attainment in Physical Education, those physically adept children in lower sets suffer by not being exposed to the greater number of able children in the upper sets. It is also considered that the superior self organising ability of the more intelligent children fulfils a positive educational function for the lower ability pupils without detriment to themselves.'

PE Coordinator (self evaluation)

These views of senior staff, subject coordinators and year leaders are in contrast to those expressed by the headmaster, deputy headmaster and Maths coordinator. Yet the teachers holding these perspectives, which often contain anti-setting attitudes are daily confronted by a mode of organisation, the setting system, which does not, in their views, facilitate the teaching of their subjects. Why do these teachers react to the organisation in the manner of the Art teacher?

'I just tend to cope with what's happening, rather than object to it.'

Art Teacher

All of the anti-setting attitudes revealed in these quotations were expressed by teachers at Midway who have a great deal of commitment to the school. They hold key positions as senior mistress or subject coordinator or year leader. They spend many hours outside the school day organising extra-curricular activities, arranging parents' evenings, PTA activities, liaising with upper school teachers, and holding meetings with outside agencies such as the educational psychology department. All of these committed and successful teachers have earned promotion within Midway School for the support they have shown for the headmaster's policies, and for their zeal in maintaining a mode of organisation with

which they apparently do not agree. One factor* which may explain why these teachers should express one opinion in the privacy of an interview and publicly engage in actions which contradict this is the power of the headmaster at Midway School. The autonomy of the headmaster in shaping policy and the constraints on this autonomy will now be considered.

The Role of the Headmaster

'A Middle School headship is, it appears, no job for an applicant with a low tolerance for ambiguity or with a high score in tests for authoritarianism.'

J Nias (1980)

Nias was, of course, writing about the ideal middle school, and discussing theoretical models of organisation. But what of the real middle school? The type of organisation at Midway Middle School, with its stress on subject specialism and ability grouping, has been implemented and maintained by the headmaster, who was appointed as headmaster of Midway Secondary Modern and head designate of Midway Middle. Amongst staff holding conflicting ideologies it is the headmaster's which is dominant. Recently, Burgess (1983) has evaluated the power of the headmaster to influence policy in a large comprehensive school, and some of the constraints on this power. However, in the smaller middle school, without the intervention of powerful subject departments (see Ball 1981 on English departments in the comprehensive school), this power to influence policy may be even greater.

Factors which affect the headmaster's choice of type of organisation arise from his own career biography, some are internal and arise from the school itself, and some are external to it. The headmaster's own teaching experience was in state selective schools, initially at a grammar school,

* Another factor, of course, which may have affected response, was my known views on setting. (See Methodology)

and later as deputy headmaster and headmaster of secondary modern schools. This experience of selective schools with traditional modes of organisation may have led the headmaster to resist integration of subjects, and to perceive mixed ability teaching as an impossibility. Of the decision to adopt History and Geography as opposed to an integrated Humanities programme, the headmaster recalls discussions with like-minded colleagues at the stage when Midway Secondary Modern was evolving into Midway Middle:

'This came up in the field of History and Geography. It's true to say that the people who led the discussion were both secondary specialists in the subjects, neither of whom wanted to see their subjects submerged in others. Both felt that History is a chronological subject, and Geography is a subject you should do in some sequential way. They felt that there was a danger that if you mixed them into integrated work you get a bit of a hotch potch, and work gets duplicated.'

? Headmaster

The headmaster stated in interview that his personal experience as a classroom teacher had convinced him of the inadvisability of mixed ability teaching:

'My own experience of teaching these groups of children made me ask myself, "Are you really extending both ends of the group?" I couldn't honestly say that I was in the mixed ability classes. I take mixed ability classes for RI in the third year, and to some people this may not be a very important subject, but nonetheless it is a time when I take both groups together. I find over and over again that the Anna Thompsons of this world and the Jenny Phillips outstrip totally, and completely finish anything which I may ask them to do, when you get the Wayne Smiths and Darren Dawsons of this world who are nowhere near the finish at all.'

Headmaster

The headmaster, apart from his personal preference for subject specialism and ability grouping, may have had little alternative in their implementation, given the staffing of the school when he took up his appointment. Initially, the school was staffed by colleagues uncommitted to the idea of creating an innovative middle school, but well versed in secondary modern practices.

The experience of the pupils in the secondary modern School during the change-over period may also affect the headmaster's present perception of his pupils. He had seen that the majority of pupils in the secondary modern who came from the Brookway Estate held anti school attitudes. The change to a comprehensive middle school meant an influx of children from Middleton who would be more amenable to the school's programme. The headmaster feels that it is very important to maintain in the school intake at least 40% of Middleton children. The headmaster has referred to Middleton children in staff meetings as 'leaders', and has urged staff to impress Middleton parents at prospective parents' evenings, in order to attract as many Middleton children as possible. That Middleton children should represent a 'pool of ability' to the headmaster is borne out by the set placement of these children compared with Brookway Estate children. For the fourth year Maths sets in 1984-85, the composition of set 1 (the highest ability set), 70% were Middleton children and 30% Estate children. When sets 4 and 5 (the lowest ability sets, combined here to give comparable numbers) are considered, 16% were Middleton children and 84% Estate children. Since, as suggested in Chapter 1, the children may tend to be in the same sets for many subjects (crypto-streaming), therefore proportions would be relatively stable across the curriculum.

That the headmaster retains setting in order to encourage parents of

Middleton to send their children to the school is clear. Two other factors act on the headmaster's choice of organisation, firstly the 1981 Act giving parental choice of schools, and secondly falling rolls. The headmaster feels that Brookway parents may do this, in the headmaster's view not perhaps because they are attracted by Midway's particular type of education but because they might be unaware of other forms of educational experience available elsewhere in the local authority. In this sense, Midway would be the convenient and automatic choice for Brookway parents. However, the headmaster feels that the well informed and articulate parents of Middleton may 'shop around' and choose an alternative if any radical changes were made to the philosophy and organisation of Midway. In the staff meeting in which staff were exhorted to attract Middleton parents, the headmaster also made a veiled threat to the staff. He claimed that Middleton parents sent their children to Midway because of its mode of organisation, and if this organisation was not maintained these parents would turn away from the school. He then listed the consequences of this for the staff - they would be teaching in a school with an intake of 100% estate children. This revived for the deputy head his nightmares about his previous appointment in an 'estate school'. Additionally, with this happening in the context of falling rolls, owing to population contraction, then this would mean redeployment of staff and loss of points. Thus the issue of defending his mode of organisation was neatly coupled with the issue of staff keeping their jobs. This was hardly the stuff to inspire the staff to either experiment or innovate.

The headmaster also saw standards to be falling. When I made requests for mixed ability science teaching in the fourth year, my request was not granted, and the reasons given to me by the headmaster through the medium of the Maths coordinator were:

'The headmaster says all the middle schools in the authority are changing to setting because of falling standards, and we have to raise standards because of pressure from parents and the upper schools.'

Maths Coordinator

This post Green Paper pessimism and the school's response to it is not merely to please Middleton parents. The headmaster perceives a top down pressure from upper schools. Although the public examination is some distance removed from Midway, it is not a great distance. When pupils leave Midway, they will choose subject options in their upper schools after only two terms there. The headmaster perceives that the pupils will need to know what a study of specialist subjects like History, Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Biology etc constitutes, and also to have reached a satisfactory standard in each. In the headmaster's view, the middle school becomes a springboard for the public examination system, and subject specialism and the setting system are seen as the only preparation for this.

I have tried to show in this chapter how the previous organisation of Midway Secondary Modern exerts its influence in Midway Middle. This influence is reflected in the organisation of the school, and in the perceptions some of the staff have of their pupils. I have also tried to show the power of the headmaster in maintaining organisational differentiation. The headmaster was seen to be constrained in decision making by his own previous school experiences, the expectations of some parents, falling rolls, pressure from upper schools and the public examination system. It is suggested here that Midway Middle School bears little resemblance to the image of the 'ideal' middle school.

It has been the function of this chapter to provide a context in which the remaining two chapters may be located.

NOTESNote 1

I did not as part of this study undertake any observation of first schools or interview first school teachers. However, in my role as a middle school teacher I had informal conversations with first school teachers, attended liaison meetings with first schools and learned something of pupil experience by informal conversation with pupils when they arrived at Midway. From these sources it seemed that generalist teaching was the most common form with perhaps pupils going to specialist teachers for only music and swimming. The curriculum of first schools was organised in such a way that some integration occurred. While this was not a total 'integrated day', integration occurred where subjects like History, Geography, Science, Religious Education and Art and Craft were integrated in the form of 'topic' or 'project'.

Note 2

Table 6 shows all subjects to be setted in Year 4. In the case of Maths, English and Humanities (History and Geography) this can be considered as principled setting. For the remaining subjects, setting must be considered as residual.

CHAPTER 4

The informal differentiation of pupils in the middle school classroom

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The informal differentiation of pupils in the middle school classroom

In Chapter 1, evidence was provided to show the extent of selection procedures in 9-13 middle schools. In Chapter 2, I reviewed some approaches to the study of the differentiation process in schools. It is the purpose of this chapter to link the two issues and to explore differentiation processes at the classroom level in a 9-13 middle school. In Chapter 5, I will show some of the implications of this classroom process for pupils when the allocation procedure for set placement is considered.

Evidence presented here is concerned with the typification process at the classroom level, and the following chapter will attempt to link this process with the formal and institutionalised differentiation in the form of a setting system. This approach will illuminate the social processes which attend both the differentiation and allocation of pupils in the 9-13 middle school studied. The evidence is derived from a number of sources: previous studies, interviews with teachers at the school, repertory grid technique, field notes and official documents.

Research into the problem of how teachers differentiate pupils has tended to adopt a theoretical position derived from self fulfilling prophecy theory or labelling theory. Both of these perspectives are tidily condensed by D Hargreaves et al (D H Hargreaves et al 1975, p 141).

Self fulfilling prophecy theory

- 1 Teacher believes x about a pupil (ie that he is very intelligent).
- 2 Teacher makes predictions about a pupil (eg that he will make outstanding academic progress).
- 3 Change in teacher attitude and behaviour towards the pupil.
- 4 Change in pupil's self conception and behaviour in line with the teacher's attitude/behaviour.
- 5 Fulfilment of the prediction.

Labelling theory

- 1 Pupil commits deviant act.
- 2 Teacher labels the act or person as deviant.
- 3 Problems experienced by the pupil as a result of the labelling.
- 4 Commission of further deviance by the pupil as a means of resolving such problems.

The first approach, self fulfilling prophecy theory, is essentially positive in that it focuses attention on conformist pupils. Certainly it took that form in the Rosenthal and Jacobson study (1968). In this type of 'action' research, inducing failure would have been morally unacceptable. However, as Rist (1970) has shown, it has implications for failure as well. The second approach, labelling theory, focuses principally on deviants. Despite this, both theories have a common theme: 'how do teachers come to formulate pupils being certain kinds of persons and what are the consequences of such formulations' (D H Hargreaves et al 1975, p 141). This last quotation underlines the importance of a theory of typification which Hargreaves and his colleagues proceed to generate. Other studies utilising self fulfilling prophecy theory or labelling theory have not relied on any developed theory of typification, yet have described the typing of pupils by teachers (Nash 1973, Ball 1981, Taylor 1977, Rist 1970, Cicourel and Kitsuse 1963, Keddie 1971).

Researchers in their investigations of the construction of pupil identities have revealed several constructs (terms or labels) which teachers use in the typification of their pupils. Hargreaves et al (1975) discovered five categories of constructs elicited from the teachers they studied. These are as follows:

- 1 Appearance. Common constructs were: tall, short, fat, thin, nice looking, untidy, elfish looking, athletic build, a vague look in his eyes.
- 2 Conformity to discipline role aspects. Common constructs were: awkward, difficult, truculent, resentful, cocky, cheeky, rude, hostile, disruptive, chatterer, talkative, noisy, sulks, familiar, fusspot, messes about, doesn't toe the line, quiet, polite, cooperative, no problems behaviour wise.
- 3 Conformity to academic role aspect. Common constructs were: intelligent, bright, clever, brainy, hard worker, eager to learn, keen, diligent, slow, dull, lazy, sleepy, lethargic, inattentive, time waster, poor reader.
- 4 Likeability. Common constructs were: 'likeable lad', 'pleasant lad', 'a nice lad'.
- 5 Peer Group Relationships. Common constructs were: leader, ring leader, bully.

(Hargreaves et al 1975, pp 147-148)

Permutations of constructs of these kinds allow teachers to create 'types', and the creation of pupil types facilitates the teachers' twin tasks of educating and controlling. Different teacher constructs appear in the work of other researchers. Nash (1973) discovered teacher constructs which form components of personality types. Taylor's findings (1977) were at odds with Nash's in pointing to the saliency of ability constructs. Rist (1970) and Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963) discovered social characteristics (derived from social class cues) which form social

types. Ball (1981) found both ability and behavioural types. Keddie (1971) described conformity to pedagogic style types. Sharp and Green (1975) expanded the notion of teacher typification of pupils as teachers' categories of persons and also included categories of situations and categories of activities. The striking thing about these findings is their apparent inconsistency: the teachers studied seem to hold different construct systems. Yet the differences could be attributable to a number of other factors, not just the teachers themselves. They could, for instance, be explained by considering the theoretical position adopted by individual researchers, the methods chosen to elicit teacher constructs, or the period in which the research took place. However, they could also be explained by proposing that teacher constructs are, in fact, idiosyncratic.

In this study, it was my intention to discover some of the constructs teachers at Midway School used in the differentiation process. Since my approach was that of a symbolic interactionist, then my starting point was that individuals are unique, and I could not assume or take for granted that the teachers I was studying held the same construct systems, or typed their pupils in the same ways as the teachers in the researches previously cited. I therefore needed a technique for the elicitation of teacher constructs. In the study by D Hargreaves and his colleagues, teacher constructs were elicited in interviews in which teachers were asked about classroom events involving pupils, and in interviews asking teachers direct questions about individual pupils. In an exhaustive study of this nature, constructs emerged from many hours of teacher interviews preceded and followed by lengthy classroom observation. Such research styles are available only to the full time observer/researcher. However, in my role as teacher/researcher, two factors prevented my adoption of this research style.

Firstly, being a full time teacher in the middle school being researched, I had only one hour non-teaching time, which was necessary for the preparation of lessons, marking work, substituting for absent colleagues etc. This prohibited use of time for classroom observation or lengthy interviews. Secondly, classroom observation of one's own colleagues raises ethical problems (other teachers may fear that I was evaluating their work as a teacher, or that these evaluations may be communicated elsewhere in the school, to other teachers or the headmaster). Even if access to the classrooms of others was granted, I suspected that I would be merely a witness to a stage managed performance, that would give little insight into the creation of pupil identities and the significance of this for the pupils. These two limitations led me to adopt Nash's methodology (Nash 1973) involving the use of the repertory grid technique.

The repertory grid technique (originally developed for use in clinical psychology) is a central feature in the Personal Construct Psychology of George Kelly (1955). It has an advantage over the more usual psychometric attitude tests in that it elicits members' own constructs. As Taylor (1977) explains of attitude measures:

'No matter how carefully such instruments are piloted there is always the problem of their relevance to the individual's unique way of conceptualising the world and thus, although an individual would find little difficulty using a particular rating scale supplied by an experimenter, it may not be relevant to or representative of the way he normally perceives a particular person or situation.'
(Taylor 1977, p 25)

The repertory grid technique provides a technique 'whereby a client can be invited to disclose his ways (ie constructs) of discriminating his world of people (ie elements) and show in what ways they are in fact discriminated' (Ravenette 1975, p 79). Repertory grid technique also conforms to a canon of symbolic interactionist theory in its concern for exploring the consciousness of the individual. The rationale for Personal

Construct Psychology is described succinctly by Fransella and Bannister:

'To the extent that a grid gives us a map of an individual's construct system, it is probably about as accurate and informative as the maps which Columbus provided of the American coastline. As that it may be a good deal more sensitive to the nature of the person than the kinds of psychological instrument we have tended to use to date.

'The grid is perhaps best looked on as a particular form of structured interview. Our usual way of exploring another person's construct system is by conversation. In talking to each other we come to understand the way the other person views his world, what goes with what for him, what implies what, what is important and unimportant and in what terms they seek to assess people and places and situations. The grid formalises this process and assigns mathematical values to the relationships between a person's constructs. It enables us to focus on particular subsystems of construing and to note what is individual and surprising about the structure and the content of a person's outlook on the world. Yet the information it gives us is not novel or some peculiar product of our "scientific method". It is a formalised version of the kind of information we are always seeking about each other, the kind of understanding we are always in the process of gaining about each other.'

(Fransella and Bannister 1977, pp3-4)

Not only is Personal Construct Psychology concerned with consciousness. It is central to this theory that consciousness changes and is modified by experience. It is therefore concerned with change. Such a model of man is entirely consistent with a dynamic interactionist model. Man in this model is also in a dialectical relationship with his environment (of people and objects). He is partly creator and partly created. This concern for dynamism is explained as follows:

'The model underlying Construct Psychology is explicitly the idea of "every man his own scientist". Kelly believed that we strive to make sense out of our universe, out of ourselves, out of the particular situation we encounter. To this end each of us invents and re-invents an implicit theoretical framework which, be it well or badly designed, is our personal construct system. In terms of this system we live, we anticipate events, we determine our behaviour, we ask questions. It is in terms of this same system that we evaluate outcome and elaborate changes in the interpretive system itself. Thus we are "scientists" who derive hypotheses (have expectations) from our theories (our personal construing). We subject these hypotheses to experimental test (we bet on them behaviourally, we take active risks in terms of them). We observe the results of our experiments (we live with the outcomes of our behaviour). We modify our theory (we change our minds, we change ourselves) and so the cycle continues.

'Kelly devised repertory grid technique as a method of exploring personal construct systems. It is an attempt to stand in other

shoes, to see their world as they see it, to understand their situation, their concerns.' (Fransella and Bannister 1977, pp4-5)

In utilising repertory grid technique, I am aware of D Hargreaves' criticisms of the approach (1977). However, I feel this critique to be rather more of a criticism of Nash's use of the methodology than a pointing to the irreconcilability of Personal Construct Psychology (entailing repertory grid technique) and symbolic interactionism. It will be remembered from Chapter 2 that Hargreaves criticises Nash's use of repertory grid technique in three ways. I will deal with each of these criticisms, and suggest ways in which this study will attempt to ameliorate some of the problems Hargreaves raises.

1 The Methodology (Repertory Grid Technique) does not take account of changes in typifications over time and in different contexts.

Personal Construct Psychology expects changes in perception over time and in different contexts. Nash's use of repertory grid, however, does provide little more than a snapshot of his teachers. We learn only of their perception of pupils at a particular stage. No development or any possibility of development is discussed. Studies such as Hunt's (1951), Fjeld and Landfield's (1961) have pointed to the relative stability of construct systems. This makes sense, for how else could we have a concept of the stable personality, or talk of 'that kind of teacher'? However, a teacher's perception of elements (ie pupils) could be expected to change. This is entirely consistent with D Hargreaves' dynamic interactionist model. In this study, teachers were asked to provide a grid after knowing their pupils for four weeks, and to repeat this at the end of the school year. This provided a check on the stability or otherwise of element ratings, and also acted as a test of the Hargreaves' stages of typification model.

It is rather more difficult to locate teacher perceptions in a particular context. This would require repeated interviewing in a variety of contexts. In this study, teachers were asked to provide information about pupils which they had gained only in classroom interaction. The first grid was completed by teachers after four weeks of the school year, a stage at which the teachers' main experience of the children will have taken place in the classroom.

2 The exact meaning of Constructs is unclear.

The meanings of personal constructs are unique to the individual. Failure to recognise this led Nash into the trap of imputing meanings, his meanings, to the construct labels his teachers provided. At the elicitation stage, Nash rejected some constructs he regarded as functionally equivalent. For example, if polar labels, such as hardworking and industrious, were elicited, Nash rejected the industrious construct label, considering it to be functionally equivalent or synonymous with hardworking.

However, the meaning the teacher ascribed to each construct label could have been different for each label, albeit subtly different. In addition, Nash considered constructs with the same polar labels, which were elicited from a group of teachers, to hold the same meaning for each of the teachers. In his discussion of core constructs (ie constructs apparently common to a group of teachers), Nash then claimed that he had revealed a group perspective. Such a claim was totally unwarranted, since Nash had utilised an ideographic instrument (the repertory grid technique) in order to provide a nomothetic explanation. This theoretical problem is not, however, limited to Personal Construct theory and the use of the repertory grid technique. It is a problem which occurs with other methodological techniques, such as interview and observation, since, in the generation of theory, first order constructs (members' accounts) are transposed into second order constructs (the researchers' theoretical accounts). Rather

than replicating Nash's error in totally imputing meanings to first order constructs, I have considered them to hold enough meaning to enable categorisation.

In this study, teacher constructs are seen as idiosyncratic. However, some attempt has been made in the discussion of constructs to categorise construct types in the manner of Ball (1981, p 74), who emphasised the importance of such construct types as 'ability' constructs and 'behaviour' constructs.

3 The Constructs elicited merely have the status of third party talk.

D Hargreaves considered it improper to 'create a model based on the typification of contemporaries and then transpose it to another situation as a model of consociate relations' (D H Hargreaves 1977, p 282). This problem, raised by D Hargreaves, has theoretical and methodological significance. It concerns consociate and contemporary relations. Sharp and Green (1975) invoke Schutz (1964) in order to define and distinguish between two types of relationship. They do this as follows:

'Schutz notes that in commonsense knowledge other human objects, present in the phenomenal world of the actor, may be placed on a continuum from consociates to contemporaries. Consociates are people whom the actor knows in their unique individuality, while contemporaries are more remote and appropriated in consciousness via typifications. In the we relationship shared with consociates typicality of the other does not exist*, while in the actor's perception of contemporaries it does.'

(Sharp and Green 1975, p 119)

It is D Hargreaves' claim that teachers' typifications of their pupils, revealed in interview or repertory grid test, show how teachers conceive of pupils as contemporaries. Since these typifications are revealed in the interview context (with pupils not present) and not in the classroom,

* Hargreaves, in his interpretation of Schutz, does not rule out the possibility of typification in consociate relations. It is, however, of reduced importance.

then 'the typifications are derived from third party talk' (D Hargreaves 1977). Therefore, a model which is created in one context is then transposed to another.

For Hargreaves, the prevailing mode of relations in the interview or repertory grid test is that of contemporaries, whereas the prevailing mode of the classroom is that of consociates.

However, as Sharp and Green (1975) point out, the complex consociate relations requiring high intersubjectivity and reduced emphasis on typification are untypical of classrooms for most pupils. The prevalent mode of relations is, they claim, that of contemporaries, the consociate relationship being impossible for the majority, owing to both material and social constraints.

Following from this (although this is not a claim of Sharp and Green's), typifications elicited in interview or repertory grid test would stand as more than merely an approximation of classroom relations between teacher and pupils.

In structuring his criticism, Hargreaves (1977) is making an assumption that his 'dynamic interactionist theory' thesis is correct, and that relations between teachers and pupils move (over a period of time, and through the stages of speculation, elaboration and stabilization) along the continuum from contemporary to consociate. In short, typifications have long term careers.

Sharp and Green raise the possibility that, for most, relations in the classroom remain close to the contemporary end of the continuum, that typifications are quickly formed, becoming hard and stable. In short, typifications have short term careers. In this study, the teachers

completed grids after four weeks, and given the numbers of children in their classes (on average, twenty five pupils in each class) and the amount of time the teachers saw them (only 45% of the timetable) these constraints must place the teacher/pupil relationship closer to the contemporary end of the consociate - contemporary continuum, the point noted by Sharp and Green (1975 p 119).

The data derived from repertory grid are not presented here in isolation. These data are contextualised and supplemented. Other sources of data presented are - ~~teacher~~ biography, interviews with teachers, and informal observation. In addition, my own daily interaction with these teachers during the course of the school day gives me important insights into ^{working} their/perspectives. These multiple methods, then, enable cross validation.

In order to discover how some of the teachers at Midway perceive, categorise, construe or type their pupils, I concentrated upon the four first year teachers. These teachers were chosen because of their involvement in the process of allocating first year pupils to Maths sets. This I saw as a critical and important stage for both teachers and pupils. It was at this stage that ways of differentiating pupils would be most visible, and it occurred at such an early stage in the pupils' careers that the teachers would still be 'getting to know' the pupils in their classes.

A rationale and description of Maths setting procedures in the first year is provided in this extract from a recent school self evaluation exercise. The former first year leader explained:

'By half term in the Autumn term we have divided the year into five sets. In the first part of 1976-77 we attempted teaching in mixed ability classes but found we were having to group fairly rigidly

to ensure the needs of the whole ability range were met. Setting thus evolved. This system has continued as it has suited the needs of the subsequent teams, none of whom are specialist mathematicians.

'The children are tested three or four weeks into the Autumn term and are set in the light of the results, our knowledge of them and their first school records.'

Former First Year Leader, now Second Year Leader

(Self evaluation)

Knowing that the teachers' knowledge of their pupils would be an important criterion for allocation, it was therefore necessary for me to discover the teachers' perceptions of their pupils. As Taylor (1977, p 25) states, my aim was 'to chart the attributes which teachers use to explain and predict the activities and performances of the children in their classrooms'. In attempting to do this, I was guided by a main tenet of interpretive sociology that teacher definitions should be sought.

Teacher constructs were elicited using the triadic elicitation method (previously employed by Nash 1973 and Ball 1981). The four first year class teachers, who at this stage in the Autumn term were teaching Maths in mixed ability classes, ie their own classes, were presented with three cards. Each card bore the name of a pupil in their class. They were then asked to choose two pupils and say (on the basis of classroom experience only) how these two differed from the third. In this way, one or both poles of a bi-polar construct (ie ways of discriminating or differentiating) would be obtained. This process was repeated until construct repetition occurred and the teachers' repertoires of constructs were exhausted. These constructs were then ranked or ladderred by the

teachers according to the instruction: 'If you were taking over a new class, which eight pieces of information (in rank order) would you find most useful?' Ranked constructs were then arranged for preferability by asking: 'Are children to this or that end of the construct most likely to succeed at school?' To discover how individual pupils are perceived by their class teacher, the eight ranked constructs were then converted to a four point scale, for example, for the bi-polar construct hardworking - lazy:

Points	1	2	3	4
	Hardworking	Tends to be	Tends to be	Lazy
		hardworking	lazy	

Each pupil in the class was then ranked for each construct provided by their class teacher. Resulting pupil rating scores were then rank ordered; pupils with the lowest scores were assumed to be the most favourably perceived by their teachers, those with high scores least favourably perceived.

Example: lowest possible score 8 - most favourably perceived pupil
highest possible score 32 - least favourably perceived pupil

The data derived from the grids have been analysed manually to reveal how favourably individual pupils are perceived by their class teachers. In addition to this, the data from the grids have been subjected to the statistical treatment of Principal Component Analysis and Cluster Analysis, using the Flexigrid program devised by Finn Tschudi (1984). These techniques, which were not available to Nash, reveal relationships between the constructs (ways of differentiating) and elements (the things to be differentiated, in this case pupils) themselves, and also relationships between constructs and elements.

The analysis of the grids which follows will show the different construct

systems held by the four first year class teachers and how these may, for each teacher, constitute an image of the 'ideal pupil' type. Analysis will also show the extent to which individual pupils match this 'ideal type'.

Following the analysis of the grids, I will outline the significance of this analysis for the day to day activities of teachers and pupils at Midway Middle School. Some attempt will also be made to offer explanation of the different perspectives held by these teachers.

Mrs Welch

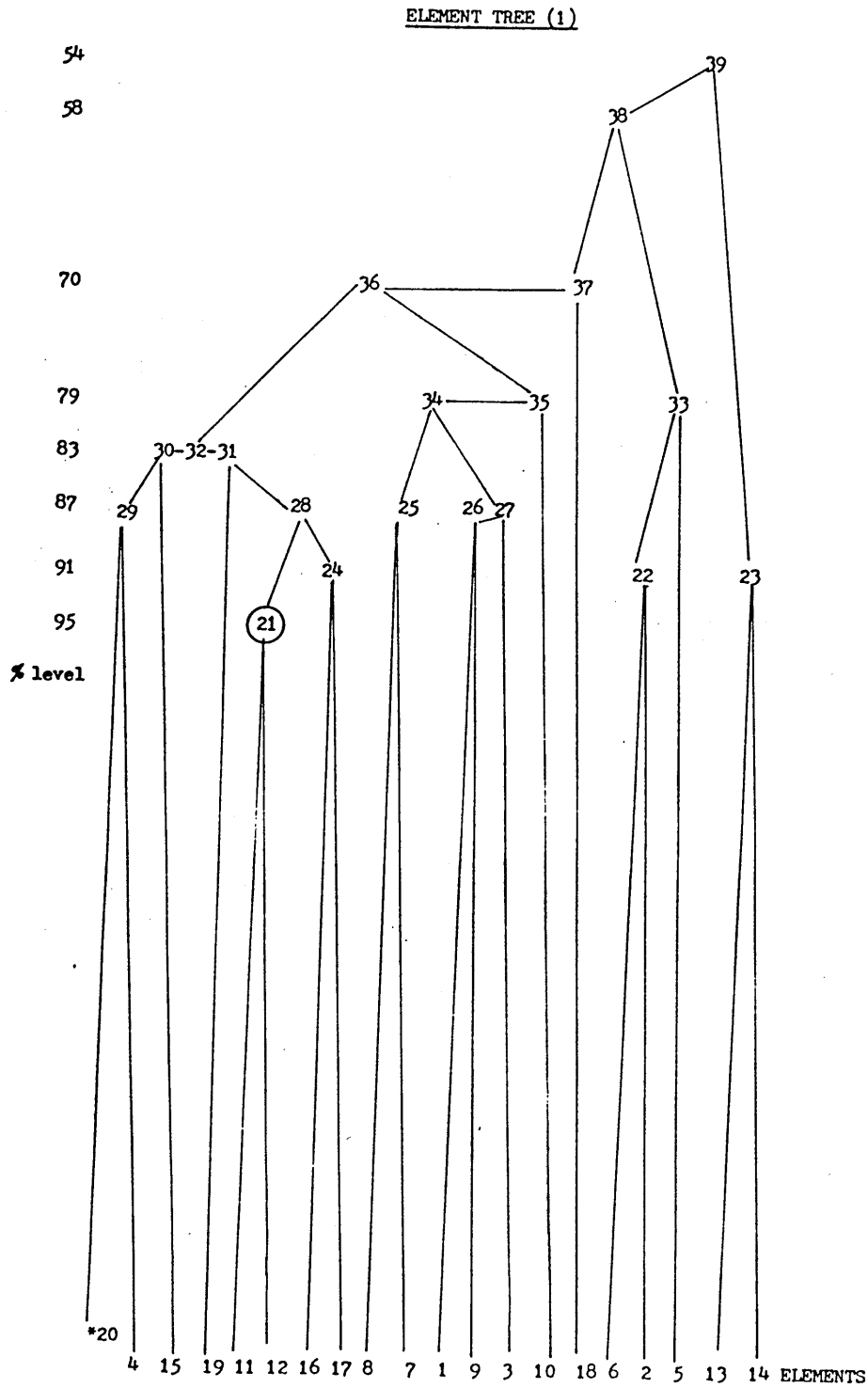
(The analysis and discussion of Mrs Welch's repertory grid will necessarily be more detailed than for the other three teachers. I hope that this first case will serve as an exemplar and aid the analysis of the remaining three grids.)

Mrs Welch's completed grid is shown below (Raw Grid 1). On it can be seen the constructs Mrs Welch used to make her differentiations, and how each element (ie pupil) has been rated for each construct (remember, a pupil conforming exactly to the pole rates 1 and a pupil conforming to the contrast rates 4). The programme only allows for a maximum of twenty elements, therefore, in each case (for the four teachers' classes), five or six pupils have been omitted. The twenty elements (ie pupils) have been chosen randomly but ensuring an equal number of boys and girls.

If we consider a single element, for example, element 5 a pupil named Craig Swift, we can see from the raw grid that his rating for each construct is as follows:

<u>Construct</u>	<u>Rating</u>
1	4
2	4
3	4
4	4
5	4
6	1
7	4
8	3

By matching these ratings with the constructs listed on the Raw Grid, we can see that Craig seems to be perceived by Mrs Welch as of low ability, Set 5 material, lazy, poor, has no spark, but is quiet, serious, and tends to be independent. When these ratings are totalled, Craig gains a score of twenty eight. With a maximum score of thirty two showing least favourably perceived pupils, it can be inferred that Craig is not very favourably perceived by Mrs Welch. The Element Tree produced by Cluster Analysis (see Element Tree 1) is shown below. The Element Tree shows a clustering of elements. Each cluster is denoted by a nodal point. To take one example from the Element Tree, the cluster at nodal point 21 includes elements 11 and 12. Element 11 is a pupil named Elisa Tweed, and element 12 is a pupil named Deena Brown (this can be checked by referring to the Raw Grid). Because both of these elements appear in a cluster at the 95% level, this indicates that Mrs Welch has difficulty in discriminating between them. If clusters appear at the 100% level, this denotes that the person completing the grid cannot, in fact, discriminate between the elements at all (ie they have received identical ratings on each construct). If rating scores are considered for Elisa (11) and Deena (12) from the Raw Grid, it can be seen that Elisa scored 16 and Deena 15, both favourably perceived by Mrs Welch. The only difference in



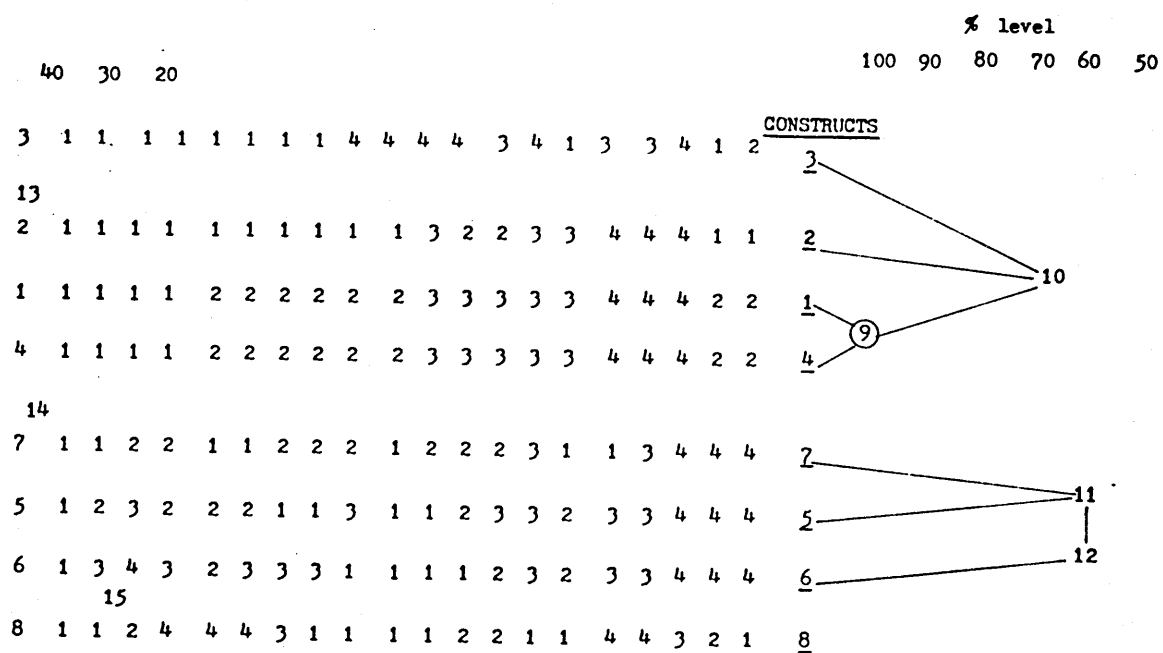
ratings appears on the bi-polar construct - quiet - noisy, with Deena being perceived as quieter than Elisa. The range of clusters appearing at the 95% level and 54% level (shown on vertical axis of the Element Tree) indicates that Mrs Welch has discriminated carefully between the twenty pupils in her class, and has construed them in a variety of ways.

The Construct Tree (see Construct Tree 1) provided by Cluster Analysis is shown below. It shows two significant clusters of constructs: constructs 1 and 4 appear together at the nodal point 9 which is at the 100% level. This means that in using Construct 1 (high ability - low ability), Mrs Welch rates pupils with the same ratings in each case as she does when she differentiates using Construct 4 (good - poor). These constructs, 1 and 4, are, in Mrs Welch's discriminations, interchangeable. When she talks of high ability, she also means good. When she talks of low ability, she also means poor. Also appearing in the same cluster as constructs 1 and 4 are constructs 2 and 3. Construct 2 was not Set 5 material - Set 5 material, and construct 3 hardworking - lazy. Appearing then in this cluster of constructs are:

Construct N^o

1	High ability	- low ability
4	good	- poor
2	not Set 5 material	- Set 5 material
3	hardworking	- lazy

The fact that these constructs are clustered together denotes a strong positive correlation between them. It indicates that in differentiating between pupils, Mrs Welch finds that these constructs have similar applicability. Similarly, for the other cluster shown which contains the constructs:

CONSTRUCT TREE (1)

Construct N^o

7	happy	- serious
5	spark	- no spark
6	noisy	- quiet
8	independent	- clings

A strong relationship is denoted between these constructs.

Which constructs then are the key constructs with which Mrs Welch makes her differentiations between pupils? When Principal Component Analysis and Element Factor Scores are considered (see Principal Component Analysis 1 and Element Factor Score 1, below), the key constructs which Mrs Welch uses to make her differentiations between pupils are revealed. This analysis shows three Principal Components. This gives us the same information as the Element Tree and points to Mrs Welch's ability to discriminate well between elements. The maximum number of Principal Components in a grid of this type would be seven and would show a highly complex discrimination between elements. However, for a person discriminating well between elements, usually three Principal Components are average (Pope and Keen 1981). In grid analysis of this type, the process of only one Principal Component would indicate what, in everyday terms, might be described as a 'one track mind', like the golf enthusiast who talks endlessly about the game, and is discriminating the elements in his environment in a very limited and partial way. The percentages provided with each Principal Component show the amount of decision making involving each component. The first Principal Component, therefore, accounts for 47% of Mrs Welch's decision making. Key constructs in this component are indicated by the size of the weighting values given to each construct (underlined in red on Principal Component Analysis table), with high positive scores indicating key constructs in the differentiation process. From this Principal Component Analysis, it can be seen that key

PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS (1)

POLE	/CONTRAST	VBL.	1	2	3	CLMTS
HIGH ABILITY	/LOW ABILITY	1	<u>0.946</u>	0.234	0.130	0.966
NOT SET 5 MATERIAL	/SET 5 MATERIAL	2	<u>0.891</u>	0.210	0.174	0.869
HARDWORKING	/LAZY	3	0.661	0.475	-0.410	0.830
GOOD	/POOR	4	<u>0.946</u>	0.234	0.130	0.966
SPARK	/NO SPARK	5	<u>0.573</u>	-0.657	-0.228	0.812
QUIET	/NOISY	6	-0.201	<u>0.910</u>	-0.134	0.887
HAPPY	/SERIOUS	7	0.517	-0.618	-0.467	0.867
INDEPENDENT	/CLINGS	8	0.254	-0.258	0.848	0.850
VAR%			47%	26%	15%	88%

ELEMENT FACTOR SCORE (1)

	VBL.	1	2	3	D**2
BUCKINGHAM	1	0.462	1.729	-0.682	3.666
GARDEN	2	<u>1.770</u>	-0.145	1.038	4.232
COLEMAN	3	0.530	0.343	-0.264	0.468
DOWNES	4	<u>-1.292</u>	-0.257	-0.229	1.788
SWIFT	5	<u>2.186</u>	-0.882	-0.212	5.600
STOREY	6	<u>1.499</u>	0.433	1.774	5.579
COSTA	7	<u>-0.618</u>	1.610	-0.775	3.576
SPRING	8	<u>-0.179</u>	0.700	-1.506	2.789
TYREMAN	9	0.461	1.231	-0.431	1.913
STOCKTON	10	<u>1.002</u>	0.005	-1.210	2.468
TWEED	11	<u>-0.649</u>	0.083	1.548	2.824
BROWN	12	<u>-0.599</u>	-0.324	1.649	3.182
PARKS	13	0.052	-2.091	-0.823	4.759
WELLS	14	0.130	-1.749	-1.625	5.717
BAMFORD	15	<u>-0.899</u>	1.364	-0.124	2.683
EAST	16	<u>-0.670</u>	-0.203	0.909	1.315
OAKLEY	17	<u>-0.780</u>	-0.003	-0.199	0.648
FRYER	18	0.129	0.790	0.349	0.763
LONG	19	<u>-0.991</u>	-0.846	1.063	2.828
WILSON	20	<u>-1.545</u>	0.867	-0.250	3.200

Variance of transformed data = 1
Variance of derived data = 0.88108
Correlation transformed, derived = 0.938658

constructs in the first Principal Component (accounting for 47% of decision making) are:

high ability	-	low ability
not Set 5 material	-	Set 5 material
good	-	poor

For the second Principal Component, the key construct is:

quiet - noisy

This Principal Component accounts for 26% of Mrs Welch's decision making.

These data suggest that in differentiating between pupils Mrs Welch, in the main, utilises two dimensions, an ability dimension and a control dimension. When Mrs Welch evaluates pupils, they are moved along an ability continuum and a control continuum.

Since these constructs have been indicated as the most important constructs used by Mrs Welch in making her discriminations between pupils, we can regard these as constituting an 'ideal type' for Mrs Welch when the positive pole names are considered. For Mrs Welch, the ideal pupil could be said to be of high ability, not Set 5 material, good and quiet. Exemplars of this 'ideal type' can be seen in the Factor Scores given to each element (see Element Factor Scores 1). Those pupils gaining high negative Factor Scores are exemplars of the 'ideal pupil' (underlined in red). Those pupils who are least like the 'ideal pupil' gain high positive scores. Taking the highest Positive Score gained, it can be seen it is for Craig Swift (2.186), the pupil discussed earlier. To Mrs Welch, Craig is the opposite of the 'ideal pupil', whereas Elizabeth Wilson (-1.545) conforms closely to Mrs Welch's 'ideal pupil'.

Summary

From this analysis, Mrs Welch emerges as a teacher who is able to differ-

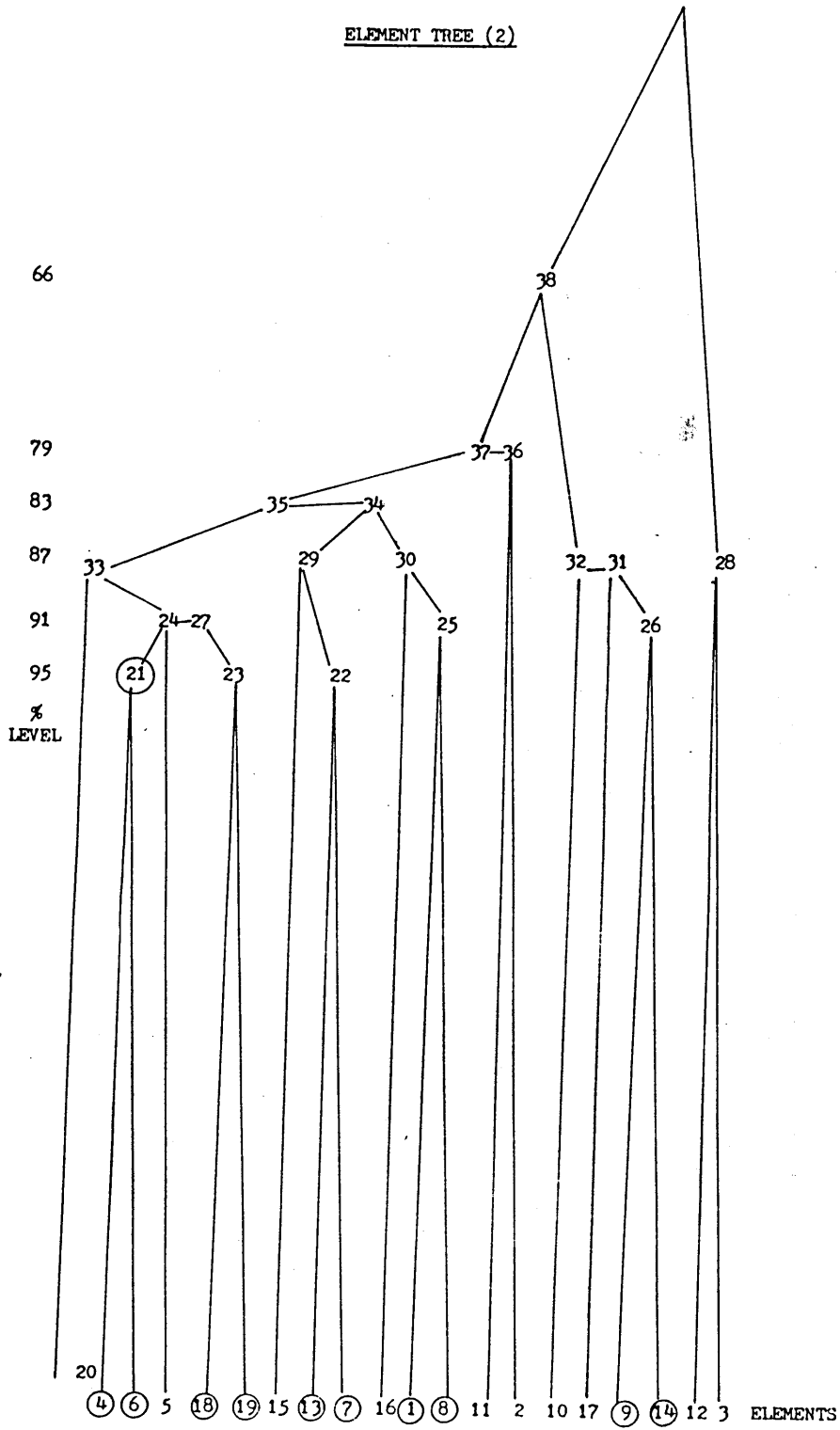
entiate accurately between her pupils, using constructs which seem to refer to the ability characteristics and amenability to control characteristics of the pupils. The 'ideal pupil' for Mrs Welch is of high ability, not Set 5 material*, good and quiet. The 'ideal pupil' in Mrs Welch's perspective is the able and academic pupil, an image to which some of her pupils conform closely and from which some diverge widely.

Miss Fish

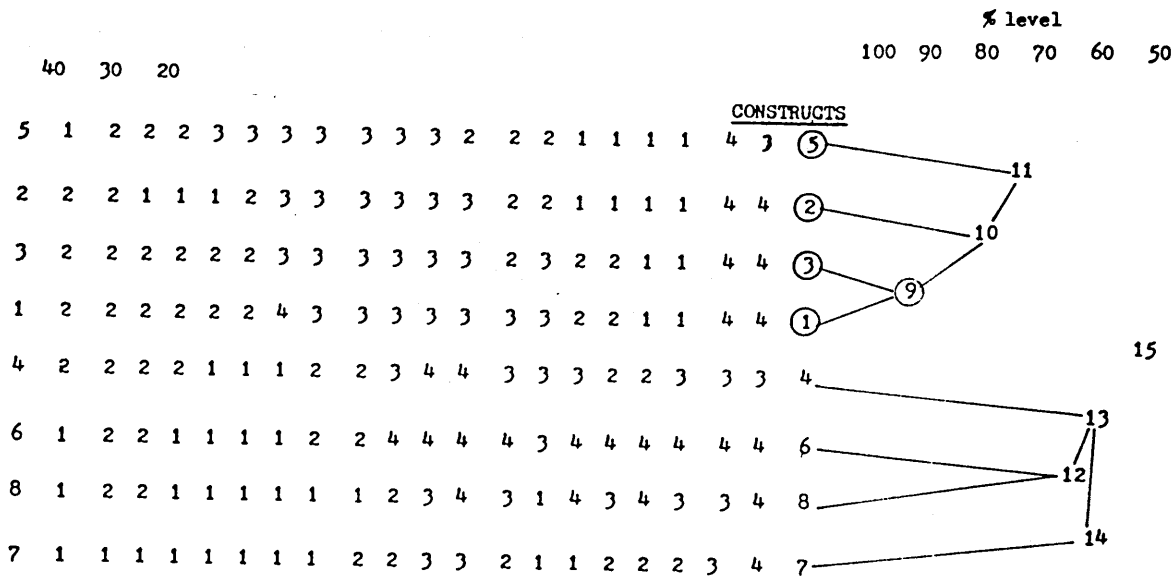
Miss Fish's Raw Grid is shown below (see Raw Grid 2). On it can be seen ratings for each element (pupil) on each construct.

The focused grid showing the Element Tree (see Element Tree 22) shows that Miss Fish discriminates fairly well with clusters appearing between the 95% and 45% level. However, there is a close grouping between the 95% and 87% levels, showing difficulty in differentiating between individuals who together form a majority of the class. For example, at the 95% level in cluster 21 are elements 4 and 6. Element 4 is the pupil Paul Baker and element 6 Marcus Mountain. The clustering of these elements at the 95% level show Miss Fish to have difficulty in differentiating between them. The Construct Tree (see Construct Tree 2 below) shows the importance of constructs 2 and 3, which appear in the same cluster at the 95% level. Construct 1 is good ability - poor ability. Construct 3 is intelligent - not intelligent. Other constructs appearing in this cluster are average - below average, and articulate - inarticulate. Appearing in a second cluster at the 60% level are the constructs hardworking - lazy, have to keep an eye on - don't have to keep an eye on, no trouble - trouble, and well adjusted - needs to adjust. This clustering, the formation of two distinct clusters, suggests that Miss Fish differentiates in two main ways, by discriminating between

* Set 5 is the lowest ability Maths Set.



CONSTRUCT TREE (2)



the ability attributes of her pupils, and discriminating between amenability to control attributes of her pupils.

Principal Component Analysis (see Principal Component Analysis 2 and Element Factor Score 2, below) points to reasonable discrimination between elements (only two Principal Components). Significant constructs in the first Principal Component (shown in red) are good ability - poor ability, average - below average, and intelligent - not intelligent. 51% of Miss Fish's decision making in completing the grid was made using the first Principal Component. Significant constructs comprising the second Principal Component were: have to keep an eye on - don't have to keep an eye on, and no trouble - trouble. These accounted for 33% of Miss Fish's decision making.

The 'ideal pupil', according to Miss Fish's perspective, would be of average or good ability, intelligent, one whom she would not have to keep an eye on, and who was no trouble. Pupils who conform closely to this 'ideal type' are shown (see Element Factor Score 2) by high negative Factor Scores (underlined in black). Those pupils who do not conform to this type (underlined in red) gain high positive Factor Scores.

Summary

Miss Fish differentiates reasonably well between the pupils in her class. Her differentiations are made by utilising constructs which refer to the ability attributes and amenability to control attributes of her pupils. Like Mrs Welch, Miss Fish can differentiate reasonably well, but by utilising constructs which are limited. Miss Fish does not discriminate using constructs which cover a wide range of pupil attributes. For Miss Fish, the 'ideal pupil' could be seen to be good or average in ability, intelligent, one whom she does not have to keep an eye on, and was no trouble.

PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS (2)

POLE	/CONTRAST	VBL.	1	2	CLMIS
GOOD ABILITY	/POOR ABILITY	1	<u>0.831</u>	-0.453	0.897
AVERAGE	/BELOW AVERAGE	2	<u>0.889</u>	-0.354	0.916
INTELLIGENT	/NOT INTELLIGENT	3	<u>0.872</u>	-0.417	0.934
HARDWORKING	/LAZY	4	<u>0.626</u>	0.609	0.763
ARTICULATE	/INARTICULATE	5	0.606	-0.675	0.822
NOT EYE ON	/EYE ON	6	0.534	<u>0.789</u>	0.907
WELL ADJUSTED	/NEEDS TO ADJUST	7	0.821	0.396	0.830
NO TROUBLE	/TROUBLE	8	0.398	<u>0.845</u>	0.873
VAR%			51%	35%	87%

ELEMENT FACTOR SCORE (2)

	VBL.	1	2	D**2
BRYAN	1	<u>1.301</u>	0.558	2.005
FRENCH	2	0.031	-0.341	0.117
MEADOWS	3	<u>2.141</u>	0.226	4.635
BAKER	4	<u>-0.660</u>	-0.185	0.471
HOUSEMAN	5	-1.056	-0.532	1.399
MOUNTAIN	6	-0.874	-0.062	0.767
TAYLOR	7	0.358	-1.043	1.216
SCOTT	8	<u>1.218</u>	1.081	2.651
ROBBINS	9	<u>-0.946</u>	1.676	3.705
ARCHER	10	-0.497	1.400	2.207
SHUTE	11	0.258	0.725	0.593
YORK	12	<u>2.000</u>	-0.455	4.207
SWANN	13	0.133	-1.201	1.460
BEAVIS	14	<u>-0.851</u>	1.673	3.524
SARGENT	15	0.089	-1.854	3.447
PLANT	16	0.818	-0.105	0.680
RIVERS	17	-0.531	1.053	1.391
LEAFE	18	<u>-1.067</u>	-1.052	2.246
MUDD	19	<u>-0.854</u>	-1.176	2.112
BROOKS	20	<u>-1.999</u>	-0.387	1.168

Mrs Bramley

The Raw Grid shows Mrs Bramley's rating of elements for each construct (see Raw Grid 3, below).

The focused grid showing the Element Tree (see Element Tree 3, below) shows clusters occurring between the 100% level and the 62% level. The number of clusters appearing at the 100% level (5 nodal points) points to difficulty in differentiating between pairs of elements. This is true for ten pupils, half the sample. This then indicates poor differentiation of elements.

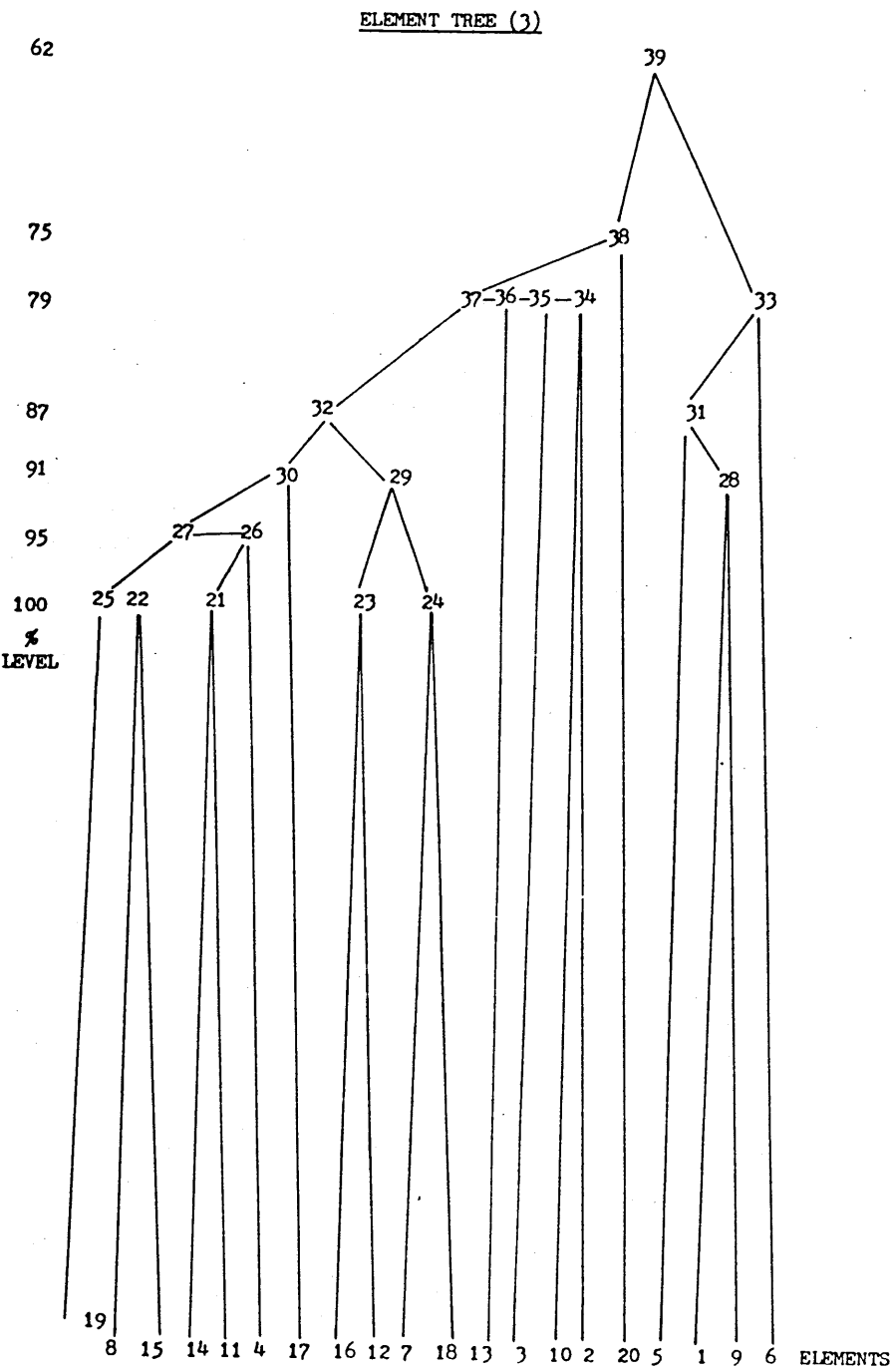
The Construct Tree (see Construct Tree 3, below) shows three important clusters of constructs. Occurring at the 90% level, the clusters are as follows:

Cluster at nodal point (10) - keen - not keen
hardworking - lazy

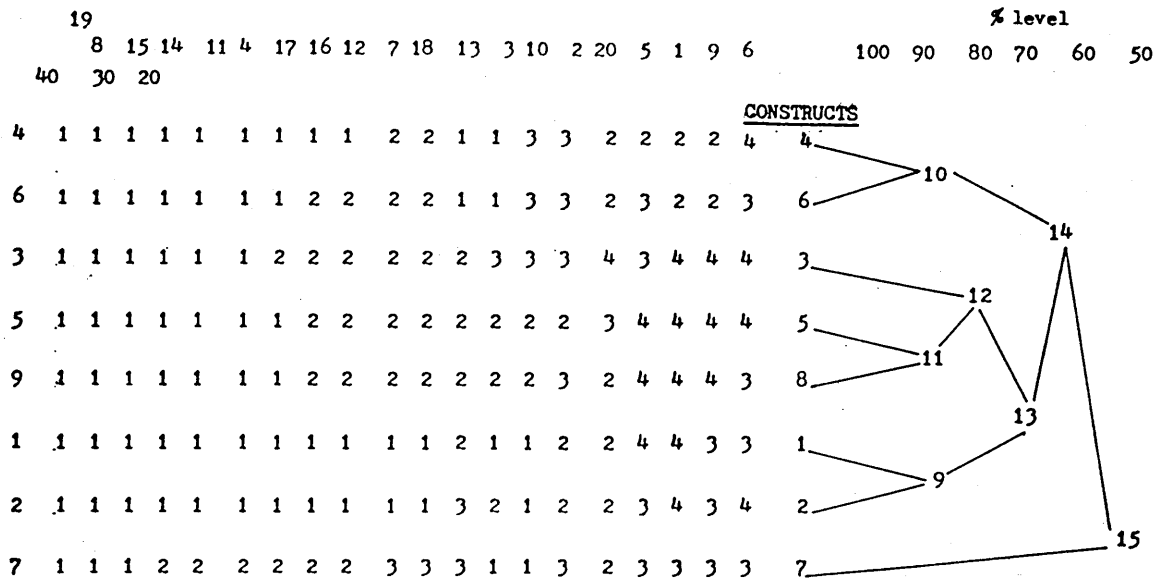
Cluster at nodal point (11) - good work habits poor work habits
achieving - underachieving
mature - immature

Cluster at nodal point (9) - no emotional problems -
emotional problems
secure - insecure

Principal Component Analysis reveals only one Principal Component (see Principal Component Analysis 3 and Element Factor Score 3, below). This indicates very unsophisticated discrimination, with 73% of Mrs Bramley's decision making utilising this Principal Component. Key constructs in this Principal Component are (see overleaf):



CONSTRUCT TREE (3)



PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS (3)

POLE	/CONTRAST	VBL.	1	CLMTS
NO EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS	/EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS	1	<u>0.899</u>	0.808
SECURE	/INSECURE	2	<u>0.870</u>	0.858
ACHIEVING	/UNDERACHIEVING	3	<u>0.890</u>	0.792
KEEN	/NOT KEEN	4	<u>0.754</u>	0.569
GOOD WORK HABITS	/POOR WORK HABITS	5	<u>0.961</u>	0.924
HARD WORKING	/LAZY	6	<u>0.775</u>	0.600
QUICK LEARNER	/SLOW LEARNER	7	<u>0.709</u>	0.503
MATURE	/IMMATURE	8	<u>0.934</u>	0.873
VAR%			73%	73%

ELEMENT FACTOR SCORE (3)

	VBL.	1	D**2
SAVILLE	1	<u>1.737</u>	3.015
WALKER	2	<u>0.869</u>	0.754
SMITH	3	<u>-0.403</u>	0.162
VICKERS	4	<u>-0.821</u>	0.674
HILL	5	<u>1.628</u>	2.650
MURRAY	6	<u>1.900</u>	3.611
PERKINS	7	<u>-0.052</u>	0.003
FIELD	8	<u>-1.136</u>	1.290
WILLIAMS	9	<u>1.441</u>	2.077
PARSONS	10	<u>0.105</u>	0.011
HORNE	11	<u>-0.982</u>	0.965
DICKENS	12	<u>-0.358</u>	0.128
DITCHLEY	13	<u>0.061</u>	0.004
LEGGE	14	<u>-0.982</u>	0.965
BRIGHTWELL	15	<u>-1.136</u>	1.290
TINKLER	16	<u>-0.358</u>	0.128
KINGSLEY	17	<u>-0.843</u>	0.711

good work habits	- poor work habits
no emotional problems	- emotional problems
achieving	- underachieving
secure	- insecure
mature	- immature
keen	- not keen

From this it can be seen that, in Mrs Bramley's perspective, the 'ideal pupil' would be mature, secure, keen, achieving, and have good work habits.

Pupils who conform to this 'ideal type' are shown in the table of Element Factor Scores (underlined in black). Those pupils who are the opposite of the 'ideal pupil' (underlined in red) are also shown on the table of Element Factor Scores.

Summary

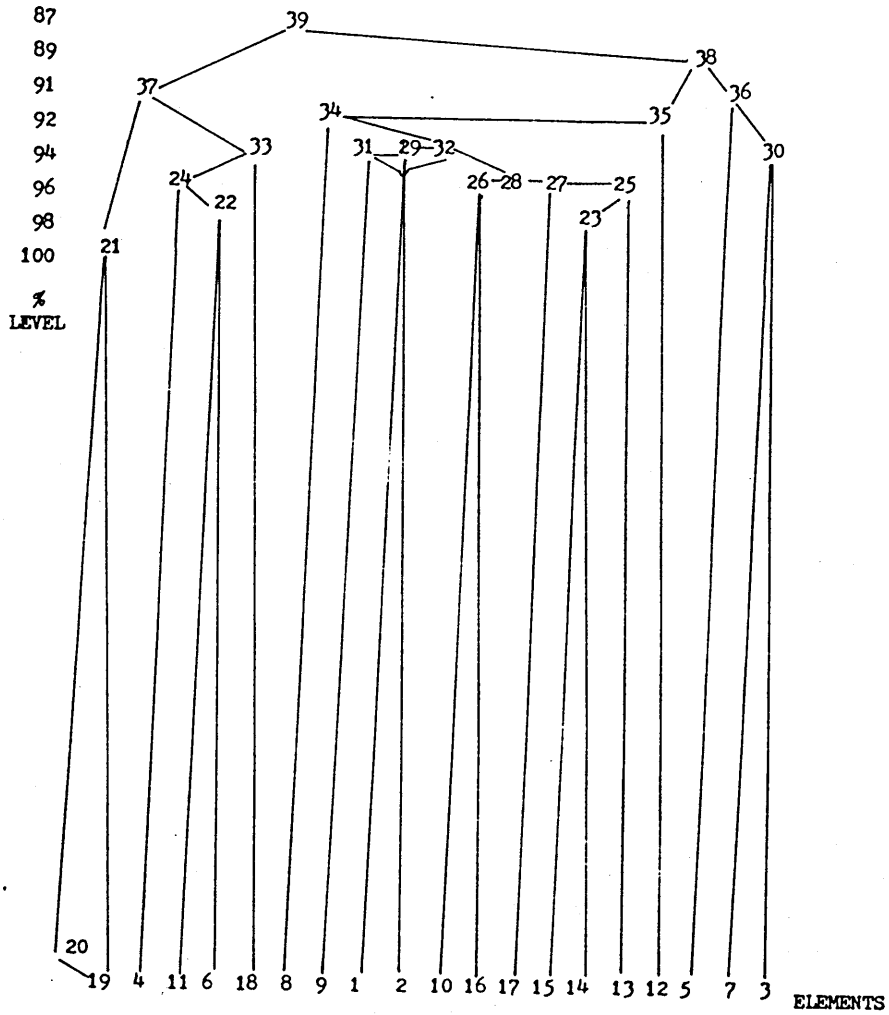
Mrs Bramley does not differentiate well between pupils. The constructs she uses in the differentiation process refer to the personality attributes of her pupils. Only one construct, the quick learner - slow learner construct, seems to refer to the ability or intelligence of her pupils. The key constructs used by Mrs Bramley seem to indicate her interest in the psychological state and motivation of her pupils. The 'ideal pupil', according to Mrs Bramley's perspective, would be mature, secure, keen, achieving, and have good work habits.

Mrs John

Mrs John's Raw Grid is presented below (see Raw Grid 4).

The focused grid showing the Element Tree (see Element Tree 4, below) shows Mrs John to have problems in differentiating between the pupils in her class. The majority of clusters appear between the 92% and 100% levels,

ELEMENT TREE (4)

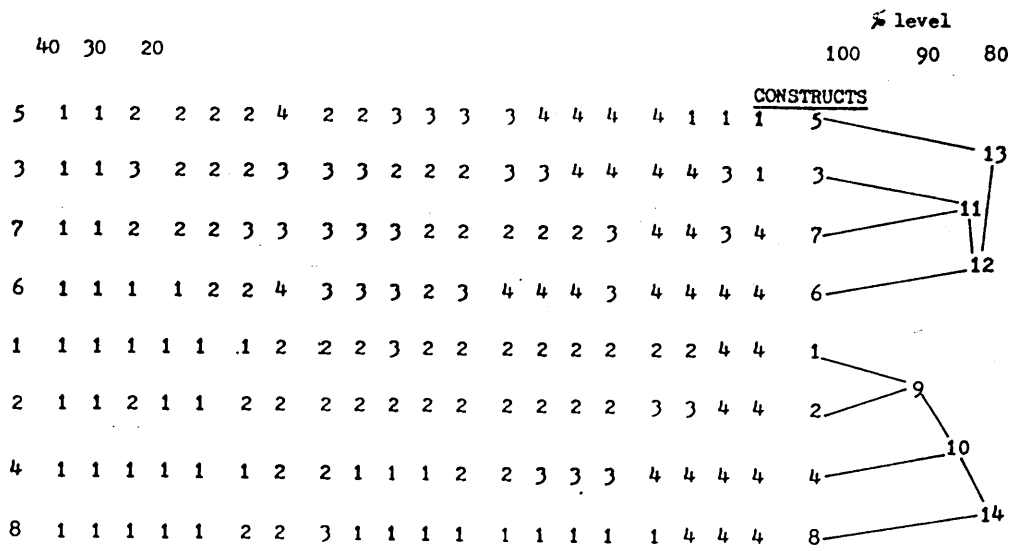


indicating difficulty in discriminating between elements.

The Construct Tree (see Construct Tree 4, below) shows two significant clusters of constructs at the 90% level. The Construct Tree shows a positive correlation between constructs 3 and 7. Construct 3 was open - secretive, and Construct 7 keen to please - not keen to please. It can be inferred from this that, when Mrs John perceives a pupil as keen to please, she also perceives him to have an open personality. A positive relationship also exists between Constructs 1 and 2 in the second cluster. Construct 1 was wants to work - doesn't want to work, and Construct 2 was industrious - lazy. From this we can infer that when Mrs John perceives a pupil as wanting to work she also perceives him as industrious, and a pupil who doesn't want to work as lazy. Such relationships, revealed by Cluster Analysis of constructs, expose some pairs of constructs as being interchangeable or functionally equivalent, and sheds some light on the apparently more obscure construct label such as open. Cluster Analysis showed the construct open to be functionally equivalent to keen to please. The positive correlation existing between this pair of constructs tells us a little more about the possible meaning of each. In Nash's study, functional equivalents were rejected at the elicitation stage by Nash, when he assigned his meanings to the pole labels. Cluster Analysis indicates possible functional equivalents without the researcher having to assign his meanings to construct pole labels.

Principal Component Analysis (see Principal Component Analysis 4 and Element Factor Score 4) shows two Principal Components. This again points to unsophisticated differentiation by Mrs John. When Mrs John's decision making is considered, it can be seen from the table of Principal Components that 57% of Mrs John's decision making involves the first Principal Component. Key constructs comprising this Principal Component are:

CONSTRUCT TREE (4)



PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS (4)

POLE	/CONTRAST	VBL.	1	2	CLMTS
WORK	/NOT WORK	1	<u>0.821</u>	-0.219	0.718
INDUSTRIOUS	/LAZY	2	<u>0.933</u>	-0.206	0.914
OPEN	/SECRETIVE	3	0.494	0.695	0.727
ENTHUSIASTIC	/NOT ENTHUSIASTIC	4	<u>0.894</u>	0.094	0.808
HAS PERSONALITY	/NON ENTITY	5	<u>0.074</u>	<u>0.936</u>	0.881
KEEN	/NOT KEEN	6	<u>0.863</u>	<u>0.341</u>	0.860
KEEN TO PLEASE	/NOT KEEN TO PLEASE	7	<u>0.832</u>	-0.002	0.692
SOCIAL	/ANTI SOCIAL	8	0.731	-0.580	0.871
VAR%			57%	24%	81%

ELEMENT FACTOR SCORE (4)

	VBL.	1	2	D**2
BAKER	1	<u>-0.133</u>	0.115	0.031
WEST	2	-0.022	0.051	0.003
HEWITT	3	<u>1.844</u>	-2.136	7.964
SPRATT	4	<u>-0.880</u>	-0.067	0.779
DIAMOND	5	<u>1.517</u>	-0.624	2.690
FAIRCLOUGH	6	<u>-1.074</u>	-0.158	1.178
STREET	7	<u>1.857</u>	-1.383	5.360
SMITHSON	8	0.370	0.915	0.975
BOWLER	9	0.322	-0.393	0.258
LANCASTER	10	<u>-0.605</u>	0.024	0.367
DYSON	11	<u>-1.238</u>	-0.313	1.631
WESTMINSTER	12	<u>1.127</u>	1.519	3.576
SHORT	13	0.340	1.453	2.226
DYER	14	0.293	1.609	2.675
BARR	15	0.181	1.233	1.553
SOUTH	16	-0.275	0.221	0.125
KEYS	17	0.001	0.752	0.566
JUDGE	18	-0.472	-0.564	0.541
WESTON	19	<u>-1.575</u>	-1.127	3.751
NORTH	20	<u>-1.575</u>	-1.127	3.751

Variance of transformed data = 0.999998

Variance of derived data = 0.808876

Correlation transformed, derived = 0.899376

industrious	-	lazy
enthusiastic	-	not enthusiastic
keen	-	not keen
keen to please	-	not keen to please

Exemplars of this 'ideal type' are revealed by the Factor Scores of the elements (see Principal Component Analysis 4 and Element Factor Score 4, above). Pupils who represent the 'ideal pupil' are underlined in black, those who are opposite to this image of the 'ideal pupil' are underlined in red.

Summary

Mrs John does not differentiate well between the pupils in her class. Her differentiations involve the use of constructs which refer to the motivation of her pupils. In Mrs John's perspective, the 'ideal pupil' appears to be industrious, enthusiastic, keen, and keen to please.

What emerges from analysis of the Raw Grids is that the first year teachers appear to hold different perspectives, and therefore differentiate their pupils in different ways. Mrs Welch is interested in ability attributes, Miss Fish in both ability and amenability to control attributes, and Mrs Bramley and Mrs John in motivational attributes. The fact that the teachers' perspectives should be different is not surprising when the literature on teacher typification of pupils is considered. Nash (1973) stressed the saliency of personality constructs, and claimed that the teachers in his study 'appear to think of and to judge their pupils not mainly in terms of their academic ability but by the personality attributes they regard as important to good progress in school' (p 23). Taylor (1977) claimed that in the teachers he studied 'nearly 50% of the teachers' cognitive space is made up of constructs which cover the academic attributes of children', and in further

underlining the importance of personality constructs Taylor claimed that 'the teacher's implicit personality theories contain relatively few personality dimensions and those which are used seem to be those which are rendered most "visible" in the teaching situation' (p 33). This point was also noticed by Heider, who explains that 'socially less visible personality attributes such as anxiety, sensitivity, kindness and shrewdness are hardly used at all' (in Taylor 1977, p 31). The work of both Nash and Taylor must alert us to the danger of hastily assigning categories to what is an extremely complex process. The evidence I have presented points to the importance of both ability and personality constructs in the differentiation process. While individual teachers tend to differentiate using predominantly ability constructs or personality constructs, differences appear between the teachers not only in the categories of constructs but also in type ((the constructs of Mrs Bramley and Mrs John, although categorised as motivational, have different construct labels, the 'ideal pupil' for Mrs Bramley being one with no emotional problems, secure and achieving, and the 'ideal pupil' for Mrs John being industrious, keen, and keen to please). The black and white picture of schooling presented by Nash, stressing personality constructs, and by Taylor, stressing ability constructs, is simplistic and provides us with nomothetic explanations structured from ideographic data. The work of Nash also provides a snapshot of both teacher constructs and an ordering of elements at a single stage in time.

Do perceptions change?

In this study, as explained previously, I repeated the repertory grid technique after the first year teachers had known their pupils for one year. I assumed that over the year the teachers' construct systems would remain relatively unchanged, but that their rating of elements (their pupils) would change as they gained more experience of them in the classroom. I presented the four teachers with a repertory grid, which

they completed at the end of the summer term. The pupil ratings on this grid were then correlated, using Spearman's Rank correlation, with the ratings they had made in the first four weeks of the school year. The results were as follows:

TABLE (7) Correlations of teachers' ratings of pupils

Mrs Welch	$r = 0.84$	significant at 1% level
Mrs Bramley	$r = 0.83$	significant at 1% level
Mrs John	$r = 0.49$	significant at 5% level
Miss Fish	$r = 0.68$	significant at 1% level

These results show that the teachers' perceptions of their pupils had changed little over the year. The perceptions they had of their pupils (as gauged by repertory grid technique) remained stable. For three of the teachers, the relationship between the two rankings of their pupils is significant at the 1% level. This evidence must cast doubt on the dynamic interactionist model proposed by D Hargreaves (1977), since teacher perception at the speculation stage had changed little by the time that the stabilization stage had been reached. I am assuming here that the processes of speculation, elaboration and stabilization would have taken place over the school year. These data indicate either that the early typifications at the beginning of the school year remain hard and stable throughout the year, so that perceptions at the speculation stage and stabilization stage are little different, or that the speculation stage lasts for the whole school year, and that elaboration and stabilization stages occur later in the school career. Since, in the school studied, the first year teachers lose their classes to the second year team at the end of the first year, there would be no opportunity for further refinement of perspectives.

How can perceptions be accounted for?

Some explanation of why these teachers hold these perspectives may be provided by consideration of the training and previous experience of the teachers. In the final section of this chapter, professional biography

will be proposed as one determinant of teacher perspective.

Mrs Welch

Mrs Welch is in her late thirties, and has taught at Midway for four years. She was educated at a Girls' Grammar School which she left with two passes at 'A' level, in Physics and Chemistry. She is three year trained, taking a secondary course, and gaining a teaching certificate in Chemistry with subsidiary Physics. All of her teaching experience has been within this one local authority. Her first teaching appointment was at a small secondary modern school, where she taught mostly General Science to CSE level, and was involved in moderating Mode III CSE. Upon reorganisation of secondary education in the authority (comprehensivisation by adoption of a three tier system of first, 9-13 middle schools and 13-18 upper schools), teachers at the secondary modern school were given the choice of staying in secondary education or of being transferred to middle schools or first schools. Mrs Welch explained to me that she felt happiest teaching younger children, and had requested transfer to a first school. At the first school to which she transferred, she taught top juniors as a general class teacher. After a year at the first school, she transferred to a newly established middle school, where her main commitment was the teaching of science. Four years ago, she was appointed to her present post as a first year general class teacher, plus responsibility for teaching first year science (no scale post is attached to this responsibility). Mrs Welch's classroom organisation and teaching style is formal, she engages in the transmission mode of teaching, and learning in her classroom is teacher centred. She disliked the current trend to practical based heuristic learning, and said that she preferred the formal way, the way in which she herself learned at school.

Miss Fish

Miss Fish is in her late thirties, and has been teaching at Midway for for the past three years. She was educated at a Convent school, and transferred to a local Further Education College at the sixth form stage to study and gain qualifications in French, German and English at 'A' level. She studied for a teaching certificate in French, with subsidiary Art, at a local College of Education, and followed a Primary course. Miss Fish considers herself to be a French specialist and, although spending most of her time as a first year general class teacher, does teach some French to second year classes. Her first appointment was at a primary school teaching four to seven year olds. This experience was followed by three more primary school appointments, where her teaching covered the seven to nine years age range. At the last of these schools she was redeployed and transferred to Midway. Miss Fish is noted in the school by staff and children alike for having a very formal classroom and rigid classroom regime. Her teaching style is always teacher centred, and she enforces classroom rules rigidly, for example, pupils not being allowed to chat to each other, whether they are engaged in academic or expressive activities.

Mrs Bramley

Mrs Bramley is in her late twenties, and has been teaching at Midway for the past six years. For the last eighteen months of this time she has been first year leader. She was educated at a girls' grammar school, which she entered by a system of teacher recommendation rather than eleven plus testing. Leaving school with Art and English at 'A' level, she entered a College of Education to take a four year BEd course in Art, Craft and Drama for the middle years. Her first six months out of college were spent as an assistant in a book shop, as no teaching position was available, then taught part time for two days each week in a preparatory

school for 7-13 year old boys, an experience which she did not enjoy. Having been middle school trained, and wanting to teach in a middle school, she came to Midway six years ago, and taught initially as a home economics supply teacher.

When Mrs Bramley was appointed as first year leader, she inherited a team of three teachers, Mrs Welch and Miss Fish (both her seniors in age and experience), and Mrs John, a probationary teacher.

Mrs Bramley considers herself to be an Art and Craft specialist at Midway, and is very interested in Drama teaching. However, she explained that if she moved to another school her intention would be to seek general class teaching, because she liked the 'social side' and 'getting to know the children better'.

Mrs Bramley's classroom organisation and teaching style exhibits elements of both formal and informal styles. The atmosphere and teaching style for most academic subjects is formal. However, Mrs Bramley is very keen to encourage activities such as open-ended investigations, when the interests of the children lead in that direction. She often proffered a progressive teaching philosophy, but pointed to the arrangement of the rest of the curriculum elsewhere in the school as a major constraint on her implementing a progressive primary approach in the first year. In addition, she felt that the teaching skills of her first year team would be unsuited to a radical change to progressive methods. Mrs Bramley has compromised, and as a result the organisation of the first year reflects that organisation which pervades the rest of the school, with its emphasis on subject specialism, ability grouping and formal teaching styles. It is Mrs Bramley's intention to introduce 'new' methods in a quiet and gradual manner.

Mrs John

Mrs John is a probationary teacher in her early twenties, and this post is her first. Educated at a girls' grammar school which was undergoing reorganisation (comprehensivisation) to become a sixth form college, Mrs John studied 'A' level French, English and Music. She entered a local College of Education to take a four year BEd course, with French as a main subject, with subsidiary Music. Despite taking French as a main course, Mrs John worried about her ability as a French teacher (she is not at present teaching French), and considers herself to be a Music specialist (she teaches Music to all first year classes). Having been middle school trained, she had experience of one first school for teaching practice, and two middle schools, one of which, her present school, was for final teaching practice. The majority of her limited experience has, therefore, been gained at Midway Middle School. Mrs John likes to work with nine and ten year olds because 'they are old enough to do harder work but young enough to be enthusiastic about it'.

The teachers' perspectives, as gauged by repertory grid technique and attitudes expressed in interview, seem to have their roots in two different and competing traditions of schooling. The perspectives of Mrs Welch and Miss Fish have congruence with the elementary tradition, whereas the perspectives of Mrs Bramley and Mrs John have congruence with the progressive primary tradition.

The elementary tradition places emphasis on the fixed intellectual capacities of children, discipline, transmission teaching, subject specialism and the inculcation of basic skills. (See A Hargreaves 1985.) In the development of the elementary school in 1907, streaming became widespread when 'the first steps were taken to permit substantial numbers of pupils from elementary schools to win scholarships to secondary schools at the age of eleven' (Blyth 1965, p 29). The introduction

of streaming and the 'scholarship' class had consequences

for both staff and pupils: 'work with the abler children

. . . began to be the prerequisite of the older and more experienced elementary school teachers, and thus the younger and rawer were assigned the task of handling the less able and ambitious children including those whose chance of a scholarship was already past' (Blyth 1965, p 29).

The overall impact of this streaming of pupils and staff in the elementary school was that often 'frustrated children battled with exhausted teachers, while both became aware that others in the school were more favoured than they' (Blyth 1965, p 29).

From the evidence of Mrs Welch's and Miss Fish's constructs, they both seem to differentiate pupils by using constructs which refer to the ability attributes of their pupils (although I have categorised this as an 'ability perspective', both teachers, as can be seen from the Raw Grids, utilise different construct pole labels). Both teachers, particularly Miss Fish, employ control constructs. In this perspective, ability is seen as something which is possessed by the pupil, which is fixed and beyond influence; ability is seen as natural or God-given. Mrs Welch and Miss Fish may view ability:

'as an essential prerequisite of intellectual attainment. Some pupils "have it", others have less of it, and still others "just haven't got it". If the pupil hasn't got it, then there are severe limitations on what the teacher can do to educate (ie improve the attainment of) the pupil. Ability in this view is something the pupil brings to his education along with his satchel, sandwiches and dinner money rather than something he derives from it. The more he brings with him, the more possible it will be for him to reach a high level of attainment.' (D H Hargreaves 1972, p 21)

Since both Mrs Welch and Miss Fish engage wholly in the transmission mode of teaching, both the ability of and conformity to role aspects of their pupils will be of prime concern to them. In interview, both teachers

revealed pro-setting and pro-subject teaching attitudes. Both stressed the importance they attach to teaching the top groups. Mrs Welch explained that she was pleased to teach Set 1; Miss Fish expressed aspiration to teaching Set 1, to teach the 'bright ones' (she actually teaches Set 2). Both Mrs Welch and Miss Fish seemed relatively uncommitted to the philosophy of middle schooling. Mrs Welch arrived at the middle school as a result of local authority reorganisation, rather than choice and firm commitment to the middle school. Miss Fish was redeployed and had had little choice of what type of school to transfer to. Mrs Welch had previous experience of an academically oriented secondary modern, which, like the elementary school, had its emphases on acquisition of basic skills, the fixed intellectual capacities of its pupils, and discipline. Miss Fish's previous experience of the primary school seems to be more in the scholarship teaching tradition. Both of these teachers identify with academic rather than expressive areas of the curriculum, Mrs Welch as the science specialist and Miss Fish as the French specialist.

The progressive primary tradition places its emphasis on a 'process' view of education rather than a 'product' view. The progressive primary tradition is a modern manifestation of the much older developmental tradition. Pioneers of developmental education had stressed the importance of the developmental stages through which the child passes (Blyth 1965). With the growth in importance of psychology in the twentieth century, interest was focused on the psychological development of the child. In this view the motivation of pupils is seen to be of prime importance. If in the previously described view (the elementary tradition), intellectual capacities were seen as fixed and responsibility for learning lay solely with the pupil, in this view motivation is seen as variable and susceptible to influences from home, school and society. Since, in this tradition, teaching is paedocentric rather than teacher centred, control is of reduced

importance. Mrs Bramley and Mrs John, from the evidence of their constructs, seem to differentiate between pupils by utilising constructs which refer to the motivation of the pupils. These teachers did not provide a single construct referring to control. Both of these teachers identify with expressive areas of the curriculum, Music in the case of Mrs John, and Art, Craft and Drama in the case of Mrs Bramley. Both of these teachers have recently graduated from four year BEd courses for the middle school range. This could account for both their recent exposure to liberal educational theory, and their commitment to teaching in middle schools. Both are middle school trained, and both sought teaching posts in middle schools. Both of these teachers, however, are less capable than Mrs Welch and Miss Fish in differentiating between pupils. This could be explained by their relative inexperience or their teaching philosophy, particularly so in the case of Mrs John, the probationary teacher, and evidence is provided in the next chapter to show the difficulty she had in allocating her pupils to their Maths Sets. Both Mrs John and Mrs Bramley expressed anti-setting attitudes, and stressed the importance of group work within the class. This is also a feature of the progressive primary tradition, with its lack of emphasis on fixed intellectual capacities, and its extolling^{of} the advantages of grouping within a mixed ability class.

Using evidence from repertory grid, teacher interviews and observation, I have tried to show how the first year teachers at Midway differentiate between the pupils in their classes. I have also suggested that the different perspectives held by the teachers may, in part, be a product of their training and experience. What are the implications for the school that these teachers should differentiate pupils in different ways, that typifications are formed at an early stage, and appear to remain stable?

Summary and Conclusions

In allocating pupils to ability sets for Maths in the first year, it was stated that three criteria were considered important by the teachers. These were: school reports, what teachers knew about their pupils in the classroom, and the pupils' test scores. In my observation of the first year class teachers in the first four weeks of the school year and at the allocation meeting, the first school reports seemed to assume little importance for the teachers. At the allocation meeting, no reference was made to the first school report regarding the mathematical ability, or regarding any other information, for any pupil. The teachers engaged in the allocation process seemed to consider only two factors: what they knew about the pupils from classroom experience, and test marks (a measure of attainment).

If the equation 'ability + motivation = attainment' is considered, it would be expected that teachers who are involved in making academic discriminations in the allocation process would evaluate all of these elements of successful learning. It would be expected that teachers making reasoned judgements about their pupils' performance and potential would evaluate the ability, motivation and attainment of the pupils. All of the first year teachers did consider and evaluate the attainment of their pupils, measured either by classwork or test scores (this is dealt with more fully in the next chapter). However, as we have seen, two of the teachers seemed almost wholly concerned with the ability of their pupils and neglected motivation, whereas two were concerned with motivation and failed to consider ability. When teachers talk of 'professional judgement', the lay person may imagine a homogeneity of perspective amongst teachers, that when they differentiate pupils they operate using the same constructs, and that these constructs cover a wide range of pupil attributes. They may also imagine that teachers as professional educators can differentiate well between pupils. As I have

tried to show, no such consistency occurs. Teacher typing varies (ability or motivation perspectives may be apparent, but construct pole labels and possibly exact construct meaning differ). Differentiation for three of the teachers, particularly the probationer, is unsophisticated.

This evidence also seems to suggest that the tentative and early typifications quickly become hard and stable, and remain unchanged over the school year. On the assumption that there is little change in subsequent years, this could indicate perhaps the operation of a process closer to a static stereotypical model, rather than a dynamic interactionist model, particularly when the pupils are assigned to sets in the first four weeks of their school career. Typification may then give way to a crude set labelling and the operation of the self fulfilling prophecy.

This chapter has touched upon some of the criteria the first year teachers use for allocating pupils to their Maths sets. It is to the allocation process itself I now wish to turn.

CHAPTER 5

Formal differentiation in the Middle School: the allocation of first
year pupils to Maths sets

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Formal differentiation in the Middle School: the allocation of first year pupils to Maths sets

In the last chapter, I considered the informal differentiation of pupils at classroom level. It was shown that the four first year class teachers differentiate between the pupils in their classes using constructs which describe them in terms of ability or personality attributes.

I now want to relate these informal differentiation processes of the classroom to the formal differentiation process of the setting system. This will be done by analysing the allocation process, and how the available types of knowledge the teachers have of their pupils are utilised for the allocation of pupils to ability sets for Mathematics in the first year. Analysis will be based on data derived from the repertory grid technique, a transcript of the allocation meeting, the pupils' Maths test scores, and pupil set lists for the first year, and their subsequent placement in the second year.

The teachers' perceptions of their pupils

If informal differentiation is dependent on teacher perception, how then are the first year pupils perceived by their teachers? Using the data derived from the repertory grid test, I arrange the pupils in rank order by construct score (by the method described in the last chapter). I also provide the pupils' positions and scores from the Maths test conducted immediately prior to the allocation of pupils to sets. The constructs used by the teachers in making their rankings are shown in each case (see Tables 8, 9, 10, 11). It will be remembered that elicitation of constructs

TABLE (8)

MRS WELCH'S CLASS - 1W

RANK ORDER BY CONSTRUCT SCORE	MATHS TEST CLASS POSITION	MATHS TEST SCORE /30
1 Joe Downs	9	20
2 Elizabeth Wilson	1	28
3 Sarah Long	absent	-
4 Rebecca East	16	14
4 Claire Oakley	9	20
5 Paul Hunter	5	23
6 Heidi Bamford	2	26
7 Deena Brown	5	23
8 Chris Fellows	2	26
9 Elisa Tweed	18	12
10 Sarah Parks	4	24
11 Simon Highfield	5	23
12 Daniel Costa	11	19
13 Kim Wells	absent	-
14 Jonathan Spring	11	19
15 Lee Tyreman	15	15
16 Lisa Fryer	19	11
17 Justin Coleman	5	23
18 Christopher Buckingham	16	14
19 Anna Bishop	absent	-
20 Darren Wolfe	20	7
21 Darryl Garden	22	1
22 Steven Stockton	14	16
23 Gary Storey	13	18
24 Andrew Ricketts	20	7
25 Graig Swift	22	1

CONSTRUCTS

- 1 high ability - low ability
- 2 not Set 5 material - Set 5 material
- 3 hardworking - lazy
- 4 good - poor
- 5 spark - no spark
- 6 quiet - noisy
- 7 happy - serious
- 8 independent - clings

Correlation between Rank Order by Construct Score and Class Position:

$$r = 0.6048$$

(Using Spearman's Rank correlation)

TABLE (9)

MISS FISH'S CLASS - 1F

RANK ORDER BY CONSTRUCT SCORE		MATHS TEST CLASS POSITION	MATHS TEST SCORE /30
1	Russell Houseman	absent	-
2	Nicholas Holland	5	24
3	Dorothy Leafe	12	20
4	Michael Willshaw	1	28
5	Nicola Mudd	19	14
6	Sarah Weaver	9	22
7	Marcus Mountain	3	26
8	Paul Baker	17	15
9	Simon Robbins	1	28
10	Kirstie Cornwell	12	20
11	Siobahn Rivers	5	24
12	Susan Sargent	22	5
13	Nicholas Archer	4	25
14	Justin Chappell	5	24
15	Vicki Swann	20	12
16	Jonathan French	17	15
17	Jonathan Taylor	21	11
18	Steven Carr	15	19
19	Belinda Shute	8	23
20	Sandra Plant	15	19
21	Paul Scott	12	20
22	Dave Bryan	16	17
23	Alison York	22	5
24	Ricki Meadows	22	5

CONSTRUCTS

- 1 good ability - poor ability
- 2 average - below average
- 3 intelligent - not intelligent
- 4 hardworking - lazy
- 5 articulate - inarticulate
- 6 don't have to keep an eye on - have to keep an eye on
- 7 well adjusted - needs to adjust
- 8 no trouble - trouble

Correlation between Rank Order by Construct Score and Class Position:

$$r = 0.4126$$

(Using Spearman's Rank correlation)

TABLE (10)

MRS BRAMLEY'S CLASS - 1B (Mrs Bramley is 1st Year Leader,)

RANK ORDER BY CONSTRUCT SCORE		MATHS TEST CLASS POSITION	MATHS TEST SCORE /30
1	Lynn Brightwell	7	22
1	Denise Coles	5	24
1	Nathan Field	6	23
1	Ian Kraft	11	19
5	Emma Horne	13	16
5	Karen Legge	2	27
7	Neetasha Kingsley	1	28
8	Christopher Vickers	15	11
9	Stuart Shepherd	8	21
10	Michelle Tinkler	9	20
11	Harry Smith	2	27
12	Joanna Dickens	4	26
13	Jason Perkins	14	15
13	Michelle Radcliffe	12	18
15	Lindsay Parsons	9	20
16	Karen Ditchley	absent	-
17	Martin Hutton	absent	-
18	Nicholas Walker	absent	-
19	Adam Hardwick	18	5
20	Stacey O'Neill	15	11
21	Melanie Richardson	absent	-
22	Gary Williams	(previously	-
23	Kevin Vauxhall	(allocated	-
		(to Set 5	
24	Nicholas Fell	17	7
25	Mark Saville		
26	Ashley Murray	16	10

CONSTRUCTS

- 1 no emotional problems - emotional problems
- 2 secure - insecure
- 3 achieving - under
- 4 keen - not keen
- 5 good work habits - poor work habits
- 6 hardworking - lazy
- 7 quick learner - slow learner
- 8 mature - immature

Correlation between Rank Order by Construct Score and Class Position:

$$r = 0.3633$$

(Using Spearman's Rank correlation)

TABLE (11)

MRS JOHN'S CLASS - 1J

RANK ORDER BY CONSTRUCT SCORE		MATHS TEST CLASS POSITION	MATHS TEST SCORE /30
1	Angela Weston	11	17
1	Joanne North	15	15
3	Lucy Dyson	1	27
4	Andrew Fairclough	4	24
4	Louise Lamb	7	21
6	David Spratt	8	20
7	Phillip Ibbotson	18	12
8	John Lancaster	5	23
9	Joanna Judge	5	23
10	Wendy South	11	17
11	James West	2	25
12	Michael Bates	9	19
13	Contessa Keys	20	11
14	Lee Bowler	23	8
15	Laura Barr	20	11
16	Sarah Dyer	absent	-
17	Justine Short	18	12
18	Mark Lawson	2	25
19	Darren Holmes	16	13
20	Wayne Smithson	absent	-
21	Martin Hewitt	22	9
22	Robert Diamond	10	18
23	Sharon Westminster	absent	-
24	Antony Fletcher	11	17
25	Ricki Street	14	16

CONSTRUCTS

- 1 wants to work hard - doesn't want to work hard
- 2 industrious - lazy
- 3 open - secretive
- 4 enthusiastic - not enthusiastic
- 5 has personality - non entity
- 6 keen - not keen
- 7 keen to please - not keen to please
- 8 social - anti social

Correlation between Rank Order by Construct Score and Class Position:

$$r = 0.1397$$

(Using Spearman's Rank correlation)

and teacher ranking of pupils took place after the teachers had known the pupils in their classes for the first four weeks of the autumn term. The rank order of pupils by construct score for each class gives some indication of the teacher's perception of the pupils in that class. For example, if Table (8), showing pupil rankings for Mrs Welch's class is considered, where Joe Downs is ranked first by construct score by Mrs Welch, Joe can be seen to have attributes which conform closely to the favourable poles of the bi-polar constructs elicited from Mrs Welch. Downs is perceived by Mrs Welch as a pupil of high ability, not Set 5 material (Set 5 is the lowest set), hardworking, good, has spark, is quiet, happy and independent. On the other hand, Graig Swift, ranked twenty fifth by Mrs Welch, conforms to the unfavourable poles of Mrs Welch's bi-polar constructs. He is perceived by her to be of low ability, Set 5 material, lazy, poor, has no spark, is noisy, serious and clings. These construct sketches, describing the ability and personality attributes of pupils, give an approximation of how individual pupils are perceived in class.

I now intend to relate these data to the allocation process, to see if the information that the teachers have of their pupils, derived from classroom interaction and classwork, is influential on the actual set placement of their pupils.

The allocation process is carried out first before half term of the first term in the school year. The children have been at the school for four weeks, and this is perceived by the teachers as a 'settling in' phase, a time in which pupils get to know their teachers and, of course, teachers get to know their pupils. The first year pupils spend a good deal of their time with their class teacher, but also encounter other teachers in the first year team for specialist subjects, such as Science (Mrs Welch teaches all first year Science) and Music (Mrs John teaches all first year

Music) and Art (Mrs Bramley and Miss Fish teach first year Art). In this way, the four teachers in the first year team gain classroom knowledge of not only the pupils in their own class but also some knowledge of the classroom performance (work, behaviour etc) of all first year pupils. The allocation process is carried out before the pupils have taken an NFER non-verbal test. This means that the teachers engaged in the allocation process have no knowledge of the measured intelligence of their pupils. First school reports and records of pupils have been studied by the first year leader at this stage, and class teachers have been notified of a number of pupils to 'watch out for', but these reports are filed shortly after the beginning of term, and seem to be largely forgotten. Indeed, the information provided by one first school is seen as being highly dubious by the first year leader, and disregarded.

At this stage, the children are taught Mathematics in their mixed ability class groups. In the first few weeks, however, pupils who are seen by class teachers to be 'struggling' are withdrawn from class Maths and sent to a fifth teacher, Mr Warden, the Maths coordinator. This small group of children, six or seven in all, will form the nucleus of the future Set 5. All the remaining pupils are given a Maths test after four weeks, the test being administered and marked by individual class teachers. When the Maths test scores have been tabulated, the four first year teachers hold a meeting to discuss set placements of pupils, in order to allocate the pupils to one of the five Maths sets. Their intention in doing this presumably is to create five teaching groups which are homogeneous in ability with children of highest ability in Set 1 down to those of lowest ability in Set 5.

If allocation to ability groups was to be on the basis of ability alone, then there would be little need to have an allocation meeting. The year leader could administer a non-verbal intelligence test and form sets on

the basis of the scores achieved by the pupils. However, at this stage, the pupils had not taken their intelligence tests, and therefore this information was not available to the first year team. If allocation was to be solely on the basis of attainment, again there would be no need for an allocation meeting. The pupils could be allocated to sets, depending on their performance in the Maths test.

In addition to their knowledge of pupil attainment as displayed in Maths test performance and classwork, the teachers engaged in the allocation process had other knowledge to draw upon when they made their allocations. They had knowledge of previous pupils of this age group, against which their present pupils could be assessed. Teachers, like wine merchants, talk of good and bad years. The teachers had sibling knowledge of some of their pupils. Brothers and sisters of their present pupils had passed through their hands previously, and could have affected their perception of their present pupils. Knowledge of physical appearance would perhaps be the first to be gleaned by the teachers when confronted by their new class. The class performance of pupils would also be becoming known by the teachers at this stage, their behaviour and conformity to classroom rules and their classwork perhaps being taken as evidence of attainment, and perhaps providing cues about the abilities of their pupils. The kinds of knowledge I have described would be amongst the kinds of knowledge the first year teachers would bring to bear in their discussions at the allocation meeting. The first year teachers would carry into the meeting not only class lists and test marks but also their personal sedimentations of previous classroom experiences.

I will now provide an analysis of the transcript of the allocation meeting, in order to show the relative importance of these various types of knowledge in the allocation process.

The Allocation Meeting

The allocation meeting was held during what remained of one school lunch time. In all, it lasted thirty minutes. At an early stage in the meeting, the teachers discussed the numbers of pupils to be placed in each set:

Mrs Welch Well, what sort of numbers are we talking in terms of?
I've got thirty.

(Mrs Welch, who teaches Set 1, had thirty pupils in that set last year.)

Mrs Bramley Thirty for Set 1, isn't it? (Mrs Bramley teaches Set 4.)

Mrs Welch Well, 'ish.

Mrs Bramley What did you have last year?

Mrs Welch Well, we had more children last year, didn't we.

Mrs Bramley That's right, 105 children at the moment.

Miss Fish Take off how many? (Miss Fish teaches Set 2.)

Mrs Bramley Twelve for Mr Warden. (teacher of Set 5).

Mrs Welch Twelve for Mr Warden, so that leaves ninety three. Thirty
for Set 1, so that leaves sixty three.

Mrs Bramley So that's two, three and four.

Mrs Welch So that's two twenty fives and a thirteen.

Mrs Bramley I can take more than thirteen. Make mine sixteen, what
does that leave us?

Mrs Welch Sixteen, that leaves forty seven.

Mrs Bramley That's about a twenty four and a twenty three, isn't it?

Mrs Welch Twenty four, twenty three, sixteen and twelve.

Mrs Bramley Unless you want to make . . .

Miss Fish It just depends on what we've got in the way of material.

Mrs Bramley Yes, it gives us a rough idea.

Mrs Welch Right, we're talking in terms of seven or eight from each
class for Set 1.

Despite probable fluctuations in the range of ability of each intake, the teachers seemed to have bounded ideas about the numbers of pupils each set should contain. The policy for the school was that sets should allow for top sets to be made up of more pupils than bottom sets, and that bottom sets of a small number of pupils would facilitate more individual attention. The order in which sets were discussed is as follows:

TABLE (12) Order in which sets were discussed

1st	-	Set 5
2nd	-	Set 1
3rd	-	Set 2
4th	-	Set 4
5th	-	Set 3

This seemed to be a matter of arranging the two ends of the supposed ability continuum, dealing with the extremes of ability first and then filling in the middle. Since part of the rationale for setting was that this form of organisation allowed for both ends of the ability continuum to be 'stretched', then early identification of the 'top' and 'bottom' would seem administratively significant. It also reveals institutionally problematic areas: the organisation seems geared to catering for extremes in ability - no teacher or the headmaster in interview referred to problems of dealing with the 'middle'.

The majority of pupils were allocated to sets without their cases being discussed. The phenomenon of hasty, automatic allocation has also been noted by Leiter (1976). These were pupils whose attainment as shown by their test marks seemed to match their teachers' perception of them. These pupils are seen as 'definites' for a particular set, and are quickly allocated. However, there were some pupils whose test scores did not match their teachers' perceptions of them. Such pupils were seen as problematic in the allocation process. The gap between the teachers'

perception of a pupil and the pupil's attainment as measured by the Maths test score was revealed by the first year leader, when she explained the allocation to me in interview:

'Generally, they, (the Maths test scores), match what we would expect. When we get shocks, that's when we look very carefully at the scores. We look carefully again, and maybe don't use the score completely to do it (ie allocate the pupil).'

First Year Leader

Later in the interview, Mrs Bramley gave an explanation of the allocation process, and again the problem of allocating a small group of pupils was raised:

'What we do is go through together on scores to start with, and every now and then somebody will be thrown up who somebody will say has scored much higher than expected, or much lower than expected, and we will change our views, taking that into account. In fact, in one case this year, we put someone who scored very highly, well not highly but highly enough for Set 2, into Set 3, because he was in my class, and I was very surprised that he got the results he did, and I raised my perception of him, but I couldn't quite see he was Set 2 material, because of things like work habits, because if you're going to be in a high flying set you need to be able to keep up with them.'

First Year Leader

This quote also indicates that this teacher thinks also in terms of 'set' characteristics. This is revealed in references to 'set 2 material' and 'high flying set'. So, rather than peer matching or ideal matching, she is set matching, where an attribute like 'work habits' of an individual pupil is being matched against the characteristics of a particular set like 'high flying set'.

At the beginning of the meeting, attention was drawn to problematic pupils, when the first year team briefly discussed the significance of the Maths test results:

Mrs Welch Did you find that your lists (of test scores) actually matched up with your feelings about your kids?

Miss Fish What lists?

Mrs Welch Your lists in order of um . . .

Miss Fish You're talking about Maths?

Mrs Welch Yeah, Maths.

Mrs John Not completely. (Mrs John teaches Set 3.)

Mrs Welch Mine didn't either.

(Pause)

Mrs Welch What we've done is put my list in order, the way I think they've been performing.

Miss Fish That's the fairest way of doing it. I gave mine a second test. I gave them two, and took the average.

This exchange reveals that the teachers' perceptions of the pupils had not, in all cases, matched the performance of pupils in the Maths test. Mrs Welch had, in some cases, ignored test results from the official test, and ranked pupils in terms of classwork, in addition to giving her class a pre-test, test, test, and even a post-test test. Miss Fish had also administered two tests, her own unofficial test and the official test. Justifications for set placement often involved the teachers citing pupil performance in class or in some previous test, rather than performance on the official test. Mrs Welch even gave her class a test after she had marked the official test papers. These appear as attempts to 'get it right', to align test scores with perception. When this process falters, or is unconvincing to others, additional information derived from classroom experience is offered to justify set placement. When test score matches perception, then set placement is non problematic. However, the

process of set placement is disrupted when there is lack of fit between teacher perception and Maths test score. This occurred in the case of twenty one pupils, who constitute 20% of the year group. The correlations between teacher perception score and pupil class position (based on Maths test score) were as follows

TABLE (13) Correlations of teacher perception score and pupil class position
(using Spearman's Rank correlation)

Mrs Welch Class 1W	$r = 0.6048$, significant at 1% level
Miss Fish Class 1F	$r = 0.4126$, significant at 5% level
Mrs Bramley Class 1B	$r = 0.3633$, significant at 5% level
Mrs John Class 1J	$r = 0.1397$, not significant

There is then a positive relationship between the teachers' perceptions of their pupils and the attainment of these pupils. However, when the correlation for the 'non problematic' pupils is considered (taking Mrs Bramley's class as an example), the correlation between teacher perception and pupil class position is $r = 0.69$, a positive and significant (1% level) relationship. Whereas, the correlation for the 20% of the pupils defined problematic is -0.03 , a strongly negative relationship. The allocation of this group of problematic pupils will now be considered using evidence from the repertory grid tests and the allocation meeting transcript.

The allocation of 'low' scoring pupils to 'high' sets

Firstly, I will deal with pupils who were allocated to higher sets than their test scores would seem to justify. Many of the quotations refer to Maths test scores, for which the maximum score to be gained on the official test was thirty.

1 Sarah Weaver 1F* recommended for Set 1

Miss Fish Can you put down Sarah Weaver (for Set 1)?

* The classes are named using the first letter of the teachers' surnames.

Mrs Welch Is she Set 1? (Surprise)

Miss Fish She got a twenty one and a twenty two.

Mrs Welch That surprises me. She looks as if she's a bit dopey.

Miss Fish She's very quiet and rather timid.

Sarah was ranked fifth by construct score by Miss Fish who, in this case, has overlooked two low test scores. However, Mrs Welch, who expressed surprise at the suggestion of Sarah being allocated to Set 1, is the teacher of Set 1, and Sarah was allocated to Set 2 in the second year, after a year with Mrs Welch. Although Miss Fish's favourable perception of Sarah was sufficient to get her into Set 1, Mrs Welch's unfavourable perception could perhaps account for Sarah's subsequent placement in Set 2 in the second year.

2 Wendy South 1J recommended for Set 2

Mrs John Wendy South.

Mrs Welch Oh, she's just like her brother. (Laughter in her voice)

Miss Fish Isn't she just like Terry?

Mrs Welch The image, that grin.

Wendy was ranked tenth by construct score, and is allocated to Set 2, with a test score of seventeen. Wendy is here being compared with her older brother, Terry. Terry is in the fourth year, and is generally perceived by all the teachers in the school to be an amiable and conformist pupil. Wendy's test score is borderline for Set 2, but here the teachers' sibling knowledge justifies inclusion in Set 2. Wendy spent her first year in Set 2, and was allocated to Set 2 in the second year.

3 Russell Houseman 1F recommended for Set 1

Miss Fish Russell Houseman's going to be good.

Mrs Bramley Is he?

Miss Fish Yeah.

Mrs Welch That's what happened to Paul to start off with.

Mrs Bramley And he sank, did he?

Mrs Welch Yeah, sank in future years.

Miss Fish I think he's a different kettle of fish. (Snaps fingers)

Mrs Welch Good! (Disbelief)

Later in the meeting, to justify Russell's allocation despite his absence for the test:

Miss Fish Russell Houseman, now he was away, but . . . um . . .
just looking at his work and performance . . .

Mrs Bramley Oh sure, we want some other um . . .

Miss Fish Well, I was just explaining he was away (for the test).

Russell was ranked by construct score first by Miss Fish, and was allocated to Set 1, despite Mrs Welch's knowledge of the fate of his brother, Paul. Paul, who has now left the school, was allocated to Set 1 in the first year, and 'sank' to Set 2 in the second year. He remained in Set 2 for the rest of his time at the school. Mrs Welch, who teaches Set 1, later explained to me in the staff room that Russell should never have been placed in Set 1. I pointed out that Miss Fish had said that he was particularly good at Maths. Mrs Welch explained that Miss Fish had previously been a teacher of younger children, and was unrealistic about identifying 'Set 1 material', and always tried to get as many as possible into Set 1. Mrs Welch maintained that Russell was exactly like his brother, Paul, and would eventually 'sink', but she thought that she would move him to Set 2 later on, because it was too soon for him to 'start to fail'. Russell was allocated to Set 2 in the second year. Again, as in the case of Sarah Weaver, Mrs Welch's sibling knowledge, and her position as teacher of Set 1, proves more influential to Russell's progress than his class teacher's favourable perception, which ensured allocation to Set 1.

4. Michael Willshaw 1F recommended for Set 1

Miss Fish Michael Willshaw's a beautiful . . .

Mrs Welch Is he? (Surprise) That's something his sister couldn't
do (Maths).

Miss Fish He's different to his sister. On first meeting you think, Oh, another Angela, but he's an intellectual Bohemian.

Mrs Welch Yeah. (Sceptically)

Miss Fish He's on the ball, a bright child.

Michael was ranked by construct score fifth, and, with a test score of twenty eight, would seem to be an uncontroversial candidate for Set 1. However, what is interesting here is that Mrs Welch again uses sibling knowledge to cast doubt on Michael's inclusion in Set 1. However, Michael did not suffer the same fate as Russell Houseman, and was allocated to Set 1 in the second year.

5 Steven Stockton 1W recommended for Set 4

Mrs Welch Steven Stockton, he's a potential 4, I think.

Miss Fish Oh, not like his brother.

Steven was ranked by construct score twenty second. With a test score of sixteen, he was allocated to Set 3, but when transferring to the second year was demoted to Set 4. Again in this example, sibling knowledge is used to facilitate the allocation of Steven. Steven is being evaluated not only against the notional 'ideal pupil' for a particular set, but also against his brother, Karl, who is a fourth year pupil, who is in Set 1 for Maths. Knowledge of Karl's previous and present performance in Maths has perhaps raised Mrs Welch's perception of Steven, in order to place initially a 'potential 4' in Set 3. If Karl had been successful at Maths, then perhaps Steven could be 'Set 3 material'.

6 Sara Long 1W recommended for Set 1

Mrs Bramley Set 1, definite s first.

Mrs Welch Elizabeth Wilson, Heidi Bamford, Sara Long.

Mrs Bramley Can I have, just out of interest, the scores on the test we've just given them.

Mrs Welch Elizabeth Wilson scored twenty eight, Heidi Bamford

twenty six, Sara Long didn't do it. I've just given them some additional things just to coincide with what I thought the order would be, and they certainly come out top on that.

Sara was ranked by construct score second. Her allocation to Set 1 was purely on the basis of teacher perception. Mrs Welch has taken pains to get her scores to match her perceptions, and in the case of Sara has been disappointed: on the pre-test, the mark of nineteen was low for Set 1. Sara missed the official test, but on Mrs Welch's post-test she had apparently performed well, although Mrs Welch does not mention the score Sara achieved. Even though Sara's score in classwork, which apparently justifies a place in Set 1, is not offered by Mrs Welch, Sara's name is linked with the names of other girls who have achieved very high marks on the official test, Elizabeth Wilson and Heidi Bamford. Elizabeth scored twenty eight and Heidi twenty six, and were ranked by construct score second and sixth respectively. Sara was allocated to Set 1 in the first year, and transferred to Set 1 in the second year.

7 Paul Hunter 1W recommended for Set 1

Mrs Welch He scored twenty three but it was because he didn't finish the work rather than not being able to do it.

Paul was ranked by construct score fifth. Despite a poor test performance, Paul was allocated to Set 1. It is interesting that 'slowness' is here overlooked because Paul was perceived as 'being able to do it'. No teacher challenged this perception, and Mrs Welch failed to provide evidence in support of Paul's allocation to Set 1. Later we shall see 'slowness' as being a criterion for allocating pupils to 'low sets'. This is, of course, in the case of pupils less favourably perceived than Paul. Paul was allocated to Set 1 in the first year, and transferred to Set 1 in the second year.

8 Nicholas Holland 1F recommended for Set 1

Miss Fish Nicholas Holland, I told you I gave mine two tests.

Mrs Bramley Yes.

Miss Fish He scored twenty four, but he's certainly a Set 1.

Nicholas was ranked second by construct score and despite a relatively low score of twenty four is recommended for Set 1. In fact, he had just been transferred, owing to what Mrs Welch described as a 'personality clash', and for this reason was allocated to Set 1 rather than Set 2, which was taken by Miss Fish. The 'clash' seems decidedly one-sided, for Nicholas, who was ranked second by Miss Fish, was described by her in a short report on him as 'very good, good attitude to work, keen, polite, could be a high flyer'. So despite Nicholas being close to Miss Fish's 'ideal' for a pupil, Nicholas could not tolerate the classroom regime, and was transferred to Mrs Welch's class. Nicholas spent the first year in Set 1, and was allocated to Set 1 in the second year.

9 Joe Downs 1W recommended for Set 1

Mrs Welch I've got one that scored twenty on the test, and I think that he is definitely Set 1 material. That is Joe Downs.

All Oh, Joe.

Mrs John I like him.

Miss Fish So old fashioned.

Mrs Bramley He is, isn't he.

Joe was ranked first by construct score, and despite his low test mark of twenty was allocated to Set 1. There seems to be a commonly held perspective as far as Joe is concerned. All the first year team seems to perceive him favourably, and allocation to Set 1, therefore, becomes unproblematical. The test performance is overlooked, and physical appearance, personality and classwork become the criteria for allocation. Joe was allocated to Set 1 in the second year also.

10 Marcus Mountain 1F recommended for Set 1

Miss Fish I've got Marcus Mountain, he must be Set 1.

Mrs Welch What did he score?

Miss Fish Well, on my two tests he got twenty six on one, but only twenty one on the other one, but he is . . .

Mrs Welch Yes well. (Dubiously)

Miss Fish . . . personality and everything.

Marcus was ranked eighth by construct score, and allocated to Set 1 despite a previously poor test score. We shall see later how low marks on previous tests can be offered as a reason for allocation to 'low sets' despite a relatively high score on the official test. Marcus was allocated to Set 1 in the second year also.

This group of pupils proved problematic in the allocation process. Their relatively low test scores (with the exception of Michael Willshaw) did not merit their inclusion in Set 1. However, the perception the teachers had of these pupils seemed influential on their allocation to sets. The teachers' knowledge of siblings, classroom performance (classwork and behaviour), and personality of the pupil transcended the test performance of the pupil in importance as criteria for allocation and information to be used in the allocation process.

The allocation of 'high' scoring pupils to 'low' sets

I would now like to consider those pupils whose test scores merited allocation to higher sets than those to which they were actually allocated.

1 Stacey O'Neill 1B recommended for Set 4

Mrs Bramley Stacey O'Neill scored eleven on the test but she's really got terrible concepts. She's learned certain things by rote, but she just hasn't . . .

Miss Fish She reminds me of a wild animal, that Stacey, that look in her eye.

Mrs Bramley Does she, does she?

Miss Fish You look in her eye some time.

Mrs Bramley Never done anything wild, has she?

Miss Fish No, no it's just . . .

Stacey was ranked twentieth by construct score, and scored eleven in the test. This test score placed her fifteenth in the class. Stacey was allocated to Set 4, although her score of eleven could have earned her a place in Set 3, where six pupils allocated had the same score of eleven. Mrs Bramley's unfavourable perception of Stacey (masked perhaps by references to concept formation), and Miss Fish's negative reaction to Stacey's physical appearance ('wild animal') may have influenced her eventual allocation to Set 4. Stacey spent the year in Set 4, and was allocated to Set 5 in the second year.

2 Simon Highfield 1W recommended for Set 2

Mrs Welch Simon Highfield scored twenty three. In fact, on looking at him, you'd probably think he should be in Set 4.

Miss Fish I was going to say, Simon Highfield! (Disbelief)

Mrs Welch (Emphatically) Simon Highfield scored twenty three on the second test (the official test) and seventeen on the first.

Miss Fish Well, you know him.

Mrs Bramley Yeah, that's fine.

Simon was construct ranked eleventh by Mrs Welch, and was allocated to Set 2. This exchange is characterised by disbelief: both Mrs Welch and Miss Fish cannot match their perception of Simon with his test scores. Simon is allocated to Set 2 perhaps reluctantly (for he looks like a Set 4), despite eleven pupils who scored twenty three or less being allocated to Set 1. Notable amongst these was Joe Downs with a test score of twenty - Joe, it will be remembered, was ranked first by construct score. Simon was again allocated to Set 2 in the second year.

3 Daniel Costa 1W recommended for Set 3

Mrs Welch Daniel Costa, he's a lazy little boy who will work his

way up eventually. Daniel got nineteen but his class-work is nowhere near Set 2 material yet.

Daniel ranked twelfth by construct score and despite gaining a relatively high test score of nineteen was allocated to Set three. Of all the pupils who were allocated to Set 2, nine pupils scored nineteen or less. However, Daniel is perceived to be 'nowhere near Set 2 material yet'. Again, Daniel's allocation to Set 3, with a test score of nineteen, can be contrasted with Joe Downs' allocation to Set 1, with a test score of twenty. Mrs Welch's prediction that Daniel would work his way up into Set 2 eventually is contradicted by her description of him as a 'lazy little boy'. The excuse of 'slowness' and imputed ability gained Paul Hunter (ranked fifth by construct score) a place in Set 1. However, 'laziness' and imputed lack of ability (as gauged by classroom performance) was sufficient to deny Daniel a place in Set 2. Daniel spent the first year in Set 3, and was allocated to Set 3 in the second year. Mrs Welch's prediction concerning Daniel's promotion had not come true.

4 Steven Carr 1F recommended for Set 3

Miss Fish Steven Carr scored nineteen, but he's a Set 3. Steven was ranked eighteenth by construct score, and was allocated to Set 3. A test score of nineteen could be considered high enough for Steven to be allocated to Set 2. No supporting evidence is required by the other teachers to justify Miss Fish's decision. Steven is quite clearly 'a Set 3' pupil. Again, as in Daniel's case, the unfavourable perception of his teacher seems more influential than the test score achieved. Steven was also allocated to Set 3 in the second year.

5 Michelle Radcliffe 1B recommended for Set 3

Mrs Bramley Michelle scored eighteen, but she's not very good. Michelle was ranked thirteenth by construct score and allocated to Set 3. Seven pupils allocated to Set 2 scored eighteen or less on the test. Michelle, perceived to be 'not very good', was also allocated to Set 3 in the second year.

6 Justin Chappell 1F recommended for Set 2

Miss Fish Justin Chappell.

Mrs Bramley Oh, I wish I was taking Set 2. (Shared laughter)

Mrs Welch He's desperately slow, isn't he, Justin?

Miss Fish His written work is appalling. He was the one that got twenty four on one of them (tests).

Mrs Welch Yes, absolutely dreadful.

Miss Fish That's why I think he'd be better in Set 2.

Justin was ranked fourteenth by construct score, and was allocated to Set 2. His score of twenty four could have justified a place in Set 1, where fourteen pupils allocated scored twenty four or less. Although a popular boy, because of his physical attractiveness, (which may account for Mrs Bramley's desire to take Set 2), his 'slowness' invalidates him for Set 1. However, 'slowness' was not seen as a problem when allocating Paul Hunter, with a score of twenty three, to Set 1. Justin seems to have internalised his teacher's perception of him: Miss Fish said that Justin couldn't believe he'd scored twenty four on the test. Justin spent the first year in Set 2, and was allocated to Set 3 in the second year. It is interesting to note here that Miss Fish, whose unfavourable perception of Justin may have influenced his allocation to Set 2, was teacher of Set 2.

7 Gary Storey 1W recommended for Set 4

Mrs Welch Gary Storey. He's very poor, very poor. It (allocation) will have to be done on classwork really.

Gary was ranked twenty first by construct score, and scored eighteen in the test. In this example, the test score is overlooked completely. Allocation to Set 4 is surprising, since seven pupils allocated to Set 2 scored eighteen or less, and twenty one pupils (in a set of twenty three pupils) allocated to Set 3 scored eighteen or less. If it was the case that Gary was indeed 'very poor, very poor' as his teacher perceived him, then a test score of eighteen, which on this test meant 60%, must reflect on the validity of the test. However, as we have seen, in the allocation

process for the allocation of some pupils, test marks seem to assume little importance. Gary spent the first year in Set 4, and was allocated to Set 4 in the second year.

8 Darryl Garden 1W recommended for Set 5

Mrs Welch Darryl Garden, who I was really surprised got eleven, and yet he scored a one on the latest test.

Darryl was ranked twenty first by construct score by Mrs Welch, and was therefore perceived in a similar way to Gary Storey was allocated to Set 5. Performance in a previous test is overlooked, whereas previous test performances of favourably perceived pupils had accounted for their allocation to Set 1 or 2. Darryl had not been amongst the first remedial withdrawal group (withdrawn in the first two weeks of term), and had scored one on the official test. Two other pupils in Mrs Welch's class who had been assigned to the remedial group, Craig Swift and Andrew Ricketts, scored one and seven respectively on the official test. Craig was ranked twenty fifth by construct score, and Andrew twenty fourth.

Considering the similar construct rankings of these three pupils, it is surprising that Darryl had not been allocated to Set 5 at the beginning of term. Darryl spent his first year in Set 5, and was allocated to Set 5 in the second year.

9 Dave Bryan 1F recommended for Set 4

Miss Fish My potential person (for Set 4) is Dave Bryan. He is the laziest person I've ever met. He's quite happy to sit there and you can tell him off and he's still quite happy to sit.

Dave was ranked twenty second by construct score, and allocated to Set 4. Twenty six pupils had been allocated to Sets 2 and 3 with test scores of seventeen or below. Dave scored seventeen on the test, but his imputed laziness was cited as making him unsuitable for inclusion in Sets 2 or 3. Dave was allocated to Set 4 in the second year.

10 Sara Parks 1W recommended for Set 2

Mrs Welch Sara Parks, that's the child that scored twenty four on the test.

Mrs Bramley But you think she's Set 2.

Mrs Welch Yeah, I think she's Set 2. I think she'll probably work her way up to Set 1 eventually, but the confidence thing isn't there at the moment, and she's desperately slow.

Sara was ranked tenth by construct score, and was allocated to Set 2.

The imputed 'slowness', which was excused in the case of Paul Hunter but not in the case of Justin Chappell, ensures Sara's allocation to Set 2.

Sara was also allocated to Set 2 in the second year, and again, as in the case of Daniel Costa, Mrs Welch's prophecy regarding future promotion of Sara did not come true. Sara did not 'work her way up' or 'earn a place' in a higher set.

11 Stuart Shepherd 1B recommended for Set 2

Mrs Bramley I think actually that Stuart Shepherd ought to (go into Set 1) but he and Harry work too closely together and it would be better to split them.

Stuart ranked by construct score ninth by Mrs Bramley, and was allocated to Set 2. With a test score of twenty one, Stuart could be considered unsuitable for Set 1. However, Mrs Bramley's favourable perception of Stuart, which would have induced her to recommend him for Set 1, is tempered by her desire to split up two pupils who work too closely together. In this allocation meeting, this was the only example of a teacher wanting to separate pairs or groups of pupils for disciplinary reasons. However, this practice is more prevalent at re-allocation meetings further up the school, when the sets which have been formed for some time contain friendship groups which some teachers perceive as undesirable. Friendship groupings can also affect promotion and demotion prospects in the re-allocation process. In a re-allocation meeting, which was held at the stage when pupils were transferring from the third year to the fourth year,

I noted some examples of this:

Humanities Teacher Paul Phillips is a possible for demotion to Set 3, but Jason Pinnock is in Set 3, and that wouldn't work.

Paul was subsequently not re-allocated.

English Teacher Justin should be in Set 1, but if we put him there he would just mess about with Darren.

Justin was subsequently not re-allocated. Stuart spent the first year in Set 2, and in the second year was allocated to Set 1. Harry Smith, the pupil he was separated from, is also in Set 1 in the second year, and they work closely together.

The Allocation of Pupils

As an observer in the allocation meeting, by the end of the meeting I was left with the same impression as Doctor Johnson after witnessing the tricks of a performing dog: I was amazed not that the teachers did it (ie allocated pupils) so well, but that they could do it at all. At the time of the allocation meeting, the teachers had known their pupils for only four weeks (Hargreaves' speculation stage), yet they seemed to have reasonably stable typifications of their pupils. Indeed, these typifications required stability, for the teachers were required to make predictions about future pupil performance not only on the basis of pure test scores but on their knowledge of the pupils.

The probationary teacher, Mrs John, was the only one to express any uncertainty about her pupils' future performance. Of the 288 statements made by teachers at the meeting, contributions were as follows:

TABLE (14) Statements made in allocation meeting

Mrs Welch	- 98 statements
Miss Fish	- 73 statements
Mrs Bramley	- 91 statements
Mrs John	- 26 statements

The contribution of Mrs John represents only 9% of the total interaction. When Mrs John made statements concerning pupils, they were usually elicited by the other teachers, and usually expressed doubts about her judgements on pupils. Mrs Bramley, although apparently making a large contribution, had the role of chairperson, and her statements tended to be ones which steered the meeting rather than ones in which pupils were evaluated. When Mrs Bramley did make statements concerning pupils, she exhibited the same degree of confidence as Mrs Welch and Miss Fish in their knowledge of their pupils. The meeting was therefore dominated by the negotiations of Mrs Welch and Miss Fish. These two teachers, in day to day interaction in school, had a mutually antagonistic relationship. Mrs Welch (who had experience of secondary teaching) had told me previously that Miss Fish (whose previous experience was limited to 7-9 year olds) was unused to teaching older children and was therefore unrealistic in appraising their performance. Their exchanges during the meeting consisted largely of accusation and subsequent justification, with Miss Fish most often having to justify her decisions.

The extracts from the meeting, which have been discussed, were made by teachers in the first year team who were engaged in the allocation process, ie allocating first year pupils to Maths sets. The expressed purpose of this process was to create homogeneous ability groups for the teaching of Maths. However, as has been shown, the teachers do not employ measures of ability (NFER non-verbal tests are taken in the second term), and for the majority of pupils in the first year formal differentiation

is possible by using measures of attainment ie the Maths test scores. For problematic pupils, about 20%, whose attainment does not match their teachers' perception of them, allocation seems largely a matter of the teachers making predictions about future pupil performance, which are based on their present perception. Types of information which are ignored on this process by the teachers are first school reports and results from IQ tests. Types of information which seem highly influential in the allocation process are pupil performance in class (behaviour, conformity to classroom rules, classwork), knowledge of siblings, knowledge of previous first year sets, and in some cases the physical appearance of the pupil.

D H Hargreaves (1967) claimed that the teachers in his study 'tended to regard attainment and positive orientation to the school's values as synonymous to ability'. In this study, the teachers (for 20% of the pupils being allocated) are even willing to ignore attainment in favour of their perception of their pupils in the classroom. Analysis of this allocation meeting transcript seems to support Ball's claims (1981) that classroom performance is the most important criterion employed in the differentiation process.

To support this argument, and also to show the degree of success achieved by the teachers in identifying talent and forming groups homogeneous in ability, consider Tables 15, 16, ^{17,} 18, 19. Each table shows the set to which each pupil was allocated, their ranking by construct score, class of origin, their Maths test score and IQ score.

From these tables, it can be seen that set placement is linked with teacher perception. In Set 1, only six of the twenty eight pupils fall outside the top ten pupil rankings by their class teachers. From Tables 8 and 9, showing pupils in Sets 4 and 5, of the twenty seven pupils in

TABLE (15)

SET 1

CLASS OF ORIGIN		MATHS TEST SCORE /30	IQ	RANKING BY CONSTRUCT SCORE
1W	*Elizabeth Wilson	28	132	2
	*Heidi Bamford	26	116	6
	*Sara Long	absent	100	2
	*Paul Hunter	23	92	5
	Chris Fellows	26	122	8
	Deena Brown	23	107	7
	*Joe Downs	20	119	1
1F	*Michael Willshaw	28	110	5
	Simon Robbins	28	121	9
	Nicholas Archer	25	102	13
	*Nicholas Holland	24	100	2
	*Russell Houseman	absent	93	1
	Siobahn Rivers	24	98	11
	*Marcus Mountain	26	88	8
	*Sarah Weaver	22	112	5
1J	Lucy Dyson	27	111	3
	Mark Lawson	25	104	22
	James West	25	107	11
	Andrew Fairclough	24	107	4
	Joanna Judge	23	109	9
	Louise Lamb	21	101	4
1B	Neetasha Kingsley	28	absent	7
	*Harry Smith	27	108	11
	Karen Legge	27	105	5
	Joanne Dickens	26	124	12
	Denise Coles	24	104	1
	Nathan Field	23	90	1
	Lynn Brightwell	22	115	1

* mentioned in the text

TABLE (16)

SET 2

CLASS OF ORIGIN		MATHS TEST SCORE /30	IQ	RANKING BY CONSTRUCT SCORE
1W	*Sara Parks	24	107	10
	*Simon Highfield	23	115	11
	Clare Oakley	20	absent	12
	Kim Wells	absent	89	18
	Jonathan Spring	19	112	14
	Justin Coleman	23	98	17
1F	Justin Chappell	24	92	14
	Paul Scott	20	93	21
	Kristie Cornwell	20	93	10
	Belinda Shute	23	99	19
	Sandra Plant	22	95	20
	Lisa Brooks	22	89	2
	Dorothy Leafa	20	80	2
	Nicola Mudd	14	96	5
1J	Angela Weston	17	99	1
	John Lancaster	23	119	8
	David Spratt	20	109	6
	Michael Bates	19	97	12
	Robert Diamond	18	108	22
	Anthony Fletcher	17	91	24
	*Wendy South	17	95	10
	Sharon Westminster	absent	absent	23
1B	*Stuart Shepherd	21	118	9
	Lindsay Parsons	20	104	15
	Ian Kraft	19	120	1
	Michelle Tinkler	20	93	10

* mentioned in the text

TABLE (17)

SET 3

CLASS OF ORIGIN		MATHS TEST SCORE /30	IQ	RANKING BY CONSTRUCT SCORE
1W	*Daniel Costa	19	97	12
	Rebecca East	14	100	4
	Lee Tyreman	15	86	15
	*Steven Stockton	16	82	22
	Elisa Tweed	12	78	9
	Anna Bishop	absent	91	19
1F	Jonathan French	15	103	16
	Paul Baker	15	91	8
	*Steven Carr	19	98	18
	Jonathan Taylor	11	93	17
	Vicki Swann	12	109	15
1J	Laura Barr	11	96	15
	Contessa Keys	11	97	13
	Justin Short	12	91	17
	Darren Holmes	13	92	19
	Amelia Derbyshire	13	99	12
	Ricki Street	16	109	25
	Joanne North	15	88	1
1B	*Christopher Vickers	11	93	8
	Jason Perkins	15	127	13
	Emma Horne	16	94	5
	*Michelle Radcliffe	18	86	13
	Nicholas Walker	absent	101	18

* mentioned in the text

TABLE (18)SET 4CLASS OF
ORIGINMATHS TEST
SCORE /30

IQ

RANKING BY
CONSTRUCT SCORE

1W	Darren Wolfe	7	81	20
	Lisa Fryer	11	86	16
	*Gary Storey	18	70	23
	*Chris Buckingham	14	91	18
1F	*Dave Bryan	17	87	22
1J	Lee Bowler	8	93	14
	Martin Hewitt	9	72	21
	Phillip Ibbotson	12	91	7
1B	Adam Hardwick	5	80	19
	Nicholas Hill	7	74	24
	Ashley Murray	10	104	26
	Martin Hutton	(previously	91	17
	Karen Ditchley	(allocated	94	16
		(to Set 5		
	*Stacey O'Neill	11	72	20

* mentioned in the text

TABLE (19)SET 5

CLASS OF ORIGIN	MATHS TEST SCORE /30	IQ	RANKING BY CONSTRUCT SCORE
1W	*Andrew Ricketts	7	89
	*Craig Swift	1	70
	*Darryl Garden	1	82
1F	Ricki Meadows	5	97
	Alison York	5	70
	Susan Sargent	5	80
1J	Sarah Dyer	(80
	Wayne Smithson	(previously	94
1B	Mark Saville	(allocated	70
	Kevin Vauxhall	(to Set 5	83
	Gary Williams	(74
	Melanie Richardson	(74

* mentioned in the text

these sets only three fall outside the bottom ten pupils construct rated by their class teachers.

When distribution of IQ score is considered, of the thirty four pupils in the first year with an IQ score above the median, 58% of these have been allocated to Set 1, 26% to Set 2, 14% to Set 3, and 2% to Set 4. The range in IQ for the whole first year is 62 points, in Set 1 the range is 44 points, Set 2 39 points, Set 3 41 points, and Set 5 24 points. In identifying talent and forming homogeneous ability groups, the teachers, in the light of this evidence, have failed. A Set 1 limited to a size of 28 pupils, which is the number the first year team had decided was suitable for this set, would allow 82% of the pupils with an IQ score above the median to be included.

The teachers involved in the allocation process would perhaps argue that there is more to success in schooling than merely ability as measured by IQ scores, and that their differentiation was based on considerations of pupils' attainment, predictions of attainment, attitude and behaviour, as the first year leader explained in interview:

'There are children who have not necessarily gone into the wrong set. There is one school (first school), naming no names, where children come to us with a very poor background in Maths, and they tend to start, we've found, in lower sets, and tend to work their way up, once they've got the hang of the different concepts. So they come to us not necessarily with a low mathematical ability but with a quite low attainment, so therefore they are placed correctly but earn their way up.'

First Year Leader

However, as I have shown in the previous chapter, two of the teachers differentiated pupils in the classroom by utilising constructs which refer to attributes of ability. The teachers, lacking knowledge of actual pupil ability, differentiated between the imputed abilities of their pupils. Also, analysis of the allocation meeting transcript shows that for 20% of the pupils being allocated attainment is ignored - instead, vague references are made to past evaluations of attainment. The most influential factor on set placement seems to be the teachers' perceptions of their pupils derived from classroom interaction.

If the teachers really are interested in allocating pupils using the criterion of attainment, then they seem reasonably uncritical of a test (compiled by themselves) in which Gary Storey, assigned to Set 4, with a measured intelligence of 70, can score eighteen, and in which Dave Bryan, assigned to Set 4, with a measured intelligence of 87, can score seventeen. The teachers also seem uncritical of organisational arrangements which do not seem to cater for the marked over-achievement of pupils like Marcus Mountain, assigned to Set 1 with a test score of 26 and a measured intelligence of 88, or the marked under-achievement of pupils like Jason Perkins, assigned to Set 3 with a test score of 15 and a measured intelligence of 127.

Re-allocation

The teachers engaged in the allocation process seemed well aware of the danger of the self-fulfilling prophecy. This is shown in the following extract from the former first year leader's self evaluation, when discussing the setting system for Maths:

'However, we are also aware of the following problems it can cause:-

- (1) It can be a traumatic change at the start of the year when everything is new and strange.

- (2) It can cut our flexibility to run over from one period to another when we are with our own classes.
- (3) Some children, particularly in the lower sets, may feel labelled.
- (4) It can produce the stigma of 'moving down'.

However, we feel these are outweighed by the benefits, especially as the groups are flexible and movement occurs.'

Former First Year Leader (self evaluation)

The remedy for labelling and the operation of the self-fulfilling prophecy is then perceived to be the flexibility of the system. However, flexibility at Midway does not involve regular re-testing or formal re-allocation meetings. Pupils are transferred informally by teacher recommendation. If pupils are thought to be 'keeping up', they remain in their previously allocated set. Those pupils perceived to be experiencing difficulties in a particular set are demoted, or 'moved down'. Those pupils who are perceived as 'doing well' are promoted.

In order to test the claimed flexibility of the setting system, I compared the set compositions as they were initially (ie after the first few weeks of the pupils' middle school career) with the set compositions three years later (ie at the beginning of the third year). Comparison of the set lists revealed that movement had taken place, with 22% of the pupils in the year being moved sets. Of these, 12% had been promoted and 10% demoted. All movements just involved a move of one set, either up or down. Most of these transfers had been achieved during the first two years, with very few changes occurring at the second to third year stage. Eight of the twenty two pupils who had been transferred sets were amongst those who proved problematic at the initial allocation, many of them having been moved for the reasons given earlier in this chapter.

Therefore, for the majority of the pupils (approximately 90%), the setting system is not flexible, and movement is severely limited. The movements which took place tended to be ones which enabled the 'tidying up' of the top and bottom ends, while leaving the middle largely unchanged. This reflects a pattern in the allocation process which had emerged at the initial allocation meeting.

This then is the pattern of allocation at Midway: pupils are allocated at an early stage, the allocations are based on minimal criteria, the allocation process is rapid, for most pupils automatic, and initial allocations tend to remain final for the majority of the pupils.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

It is clear from the evidence of national surveys and this case study of Midway Middle School that the gulf between the ideal and the real middle school is, in fact, considerable. The egalitarian ideology, so pronounced in the literature on middle schooling, is not reflected in the organisation of Midway. Meritocratic concerns underpin its organisation, and Midway has preserved the traditional selection function of British education. It is the domination of the setting system which reveals this meritocratic orientation. The adoption of the setting system as a mode of pupil grouping displays an interest in the early identification and sponsorship of talent, or at least of those pupils defined by the school as academically talented. Talent is considered as a scarce resource, and its maximisation will ensure that a minority of pupils will be propelled rapidly along the path toward the 'O' level treasure trail, while the majority suffer organisational and curricular arrangements which may be unsuitable to their needs.¹ If, in reality, egalitarianism does not impinge on the pupils, neither does it do so on the staff. The headmaster, rather than being primus inter pares, has adopted an authoritarian management style which ensures the perpetuation of both subject specialism and selective ability grouping.

If Midway fails to match up to the image of the 'ideal' middle school because of its non-egalitarian organisation, it also fails in that it is neither unique nor transitional. Midway pupils do not experience a gradual transition from primary ways of working to secondary ways. Their progress through the school is marked by two distinct discontinuities in educational

experience. Abrupt changes occur at the age of nine (when they encounter subject specialism and setting for Maths) and at eleven (with increased setting in almost all subjects). With the encroachment of subject specialism and setting into the first two years at Midway, secondary schooling influences are seen to be dominant. Certainly the much hoped for extension of primary methods into the top two years is not evident. Indeed the school organisation has not even created a primary and secondary school under one roof. Overall, the organisational and curricular arrangements are secondary in nature.

Some factors which may explain this far from egalitarian, unique or transitional organisation may be located in the origins of the school. The influence of Midway Secondary Modern School can still be felt ten years after its closure. The metamorphosis into Midway Middle had involved the inheritance of secondary modern staff and resources, and this may have ensured that for some years the secondary modern organisation, curriculum and staff attitudes concerning pupil intake would continue. In the early days, streaming was retained, and preserved the academic pretensions of the secondary modern. As the school has evolved, the streaming system has been replaced by the less harsh form of selection, setting. Subject sets, with mixed ability form groups, were adopted to ameliorate control problems with low ability streams, rather than as some ideological drive toward egalitarianism and eventual total mixed ability.

These factors are compounded by more recent developments which further explain the retention of selective ability grouping at Midway. The headmaster, as most powerful and prominent reality definer, appears influenced by the past and constrained by the present. He clearly perceives pressures which include demands for standards, demands from parents for a visible pedagogy, and demands from upper schools (to inculcate his pupils in secondary ways). In addition to these pressures, the

headmaster (in the context of falling rolls) perceives a need to attract new parents (complicated by parental choice) and particularly the middle class Middleton parents to preserve at a minimum his 40% Middleton intake. For it is, in his perception, these children who represent the pool of ability, and who will prevent his school from becoming an 'estate' school, with all that would entail in terms of his and his staff's job satisfaction. In this light, the setting system can be considered as a second order coping strategy (Evans 1985) in that it has become an institutionalised response to perceived demands for order, standards and academic success. As such, it may provide Midway with both teacher and school credibility.

The perspective of the headmaster, although highly influential, and constituting the most powerful definition of reality at Midway, is not the only one. The perspectives of individuals in any institution could be expected to be different. This was certainly true of the teachers at Midway. Significant members of staff - year leaders, subject coordinators, and senior mistress - all held different perspectives on the setting system to that of the headmaster. These anti-setting attitudes were rarely publicly expressed, and this fact highlights the power of the headmaster to impose his definitions. However, the different perspectives held by the teachers of the first year proved to be more crucial amongst the factors affecting pupil careers.

In making allocations of pupils to first year Maths sets, the teachers had several types of knowledge about their pupils to assist them in this task. The available types of knowledge were intelligence test scores, Maths test scores, first school reports, classwork grades and experience of their pupils' behaviour in the classroom context. However, in the allocation process, the most important knowledge used by the teachers proved to be their perception of pupils in the classroom context. In the

first four weeks of the school year the teachers had developed typifications of their pupils, and these typifications, particularly in the case of the experienced teachers, remained remarkably stable throughout the year. It was shown by the evidence of the teachers' informal classroom differentiation of pupils that perspectives varied between teachers. Mrs Welch and Miss Fish differentiated pupils using ability and control constructs, whereas Mrs Bramley and Mrs John differentiated using personality and motivation constructs. These different perspectives were determined by the teachers' training, experience, pedagogic style and classroom regime. The teachers created 'ideal' social types against which the real pupils of the classroom were evaluated. These social types were different for each of the teachers. Therefore, when Mrs Welch defined a pupil's academic success, it was going to be a very different definition to that of Mrs Bramley. In the allocation process, however, the teachers' professional judgements were assumed to have parity, as they were involved in the prediction of future pupil academic performance. Mrs Bramley and Mrs John actually made academic differentiations (allocation of pupils to particular ability sets), but their perception of their pupils had been structured by utilising personality and motivation constructs. While it is true to say that, collectively, the teachers' perceptions covered a range of pupil attributes, individually they were severely limited. As was shown in the analysis of the allocation meeting, the teachers tended to get their way. At the allocation meeting, views were challenged but none were overthrown. In this respect, the teachers' perceptions of their pupils were paramount. In the allocation process, the function of the test scores was merely to legitimate teacher perception. In cases where test score matched teacher perception, pupils were allocated automatically. This occurred for the majority of pupils. However, for a minority, where pupil test score did not match teacher perception, the teachers had to provide justification for their recommendations of set.

In doing this, test scores (or any other knowledge) were ignored, and the promotion or demotion of pupils was purely by teacher perception. At no point was the status or accuracy of the test questioned, even in the most extreme cases of high scoring pupils being allocated to low sets.

The allocation meeting was not divorced from the social context of the school. Staff relationships were transported into the meeting just as much as pupil lists and test scores. The conflict between Mrs Welch and Miss Fish was manifest. They dominated the discussion, and most of the justifications given for the placement of problematic pupils were made by these teachers.

Allocation occurred at an early stage in the pupils' careers. At the time allocation to Maths sets took place, the pupils were nine years old and in first four weeks of their middle school careers. This could be considered to be a plastic stage in development, a phase in which pupils could be expected to change a great deal, particularly throughout the first year as they adjusted to the demands of their new school. No allowance was made for this when the teachers were engaged in the allocation process. No provision was made by the first year teachers to re-test regularly or review formally the composition of sets. The few pupils who were transferred from one set to another in the course of the year were transferred informally and by teacher recommendation.

The allocation process was completed during one school lunch time, the meeting lasting for half an hour. The majority of pupils were assigned to sets automatically, the remainder being assigned after very brief discussion in which the teachers employed very different criteria for allocation. The brevity of this process revealed the teachers' apparent lack of concern for the possible consequences of this action.

The possible consequences following from hasty initial allocation of pupils to sets could be as follows:

- 1 Lack of flexibility in the setting system. Transfer between sets is limited. There is certainly evidence for this in the case of Maths in the first three years at Midway.
- 2 The operation of the self fulfilling prophecy could ensure that, once allocated, a pupil may adopt the characteristics of a particular ability group and continue to work at that level.
- 3 There may be a relationship between set placement in the middle school and set placement in the upper school. Certainly, Maths set placement influences placement in other subjects in the upper school.
- 4 Set placement is highly influential on option choice in the upper school and therefore on occupational choice.

Bearing consequences such as these in mind, these teachers could be seen to be making decisions which may have long term and far reaching effects. The most serious view which could be taken of this process would be to see the first year teachers, albeit perhaps unwittingly, engaged in the distribution of life chances.

The iniquities of the eleven plus system are by now well described and well understood. However, the selection procedures which operate at Midway make the former eleven plus appear as an objective instrument of social justice by comparison. Selection at Midway is desultory, premature, covert, hasty and, for the majority of pupils, final.

The present economic strictures could cause the demise of the small and non cost effective middle schools. In the event of their survival, the coupled effects of economic stringency and falling rolls could disrupt the continuation of setting as a mode of organisation. If, however, Midway Middle School is to survive, and setting is to be retained, then

the issues raised in this study should be prominent on the agenda for future discussions concerning school organisation.

The findings of this study have implications for setting policy in general, and middle schools in particular. If teacher differentiation, perceived parental pressure and centralised demands for 'standards' and 'basic skills' ensure the perpetuation of setting, close attention must be paid to its exact functioning. The teachers in this study employed problematical criteria in order to allocate pupils of tender age to different academic careers. No school policy existed which discussed meaningful concepts of 'ability' or standardised criteria for the allocation of pupils. If selective ability grouping, in the form of setting, streaming, banding or option choice, is to remain a pervasive feature of schooling in this country, and there is every indication that it is (Ball 1981, Evans 1985), then teachers' definitions of ability, and the criteria they employ for the allocation of pupils to different routes through schooling, are matters for close scrutiny.

Suggestions for further work

Inevitably, this study has raised more questions than it has answered. Some of these questions could constitute starting points for future research in middle schools, or any type of school where informal differentiation or formal differentiation take place. Such questions are as follows: Do teacher constructs change with context? Is there a relationship between construct type and subject sub-culture? How are teacher constructs operationalised in the classroom context? Are patterns of teacher typification of pupils in the third and fourth years of the middle school consistent with a static stereotypical model (owing to increased setting) or with a dynamic interactionist model? What are the pupils' perceptions of the allocation process? What are the pupils' experiences of the differentiated curriculum like? What are the parents'

perception of setting? What social processes attend the reallocation of pupils in the third and fourth years?

NOTESNote 1

If the curriculum and organisation of Midway had been influenced by the egalitarian aspects of middle school ideology, the following distinctive features* would be apparent:

- (a) Unlimited access to all areas of the curriculum for all pupils.
- (b) No curriculum decisions would be taken which would limit a child's future.
- (c) Options would be left open as long as possible.
- (d) Use of integrated and thematic studies would encourage egalitarianism,
- (e) Strong preference for mixed classes.
- (f) Equal resources would be made available for children of all abilities.

* key features of an egalitarian middle school as identified by J Nias (1980, p 73)

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APPENDIX (1)

Methodology

APPENDIX (1)Methodology

My interest in interpretive sociology arose from study for an in-service CNAABED degree. This course of study was undertaken when I had been teaching for ten years, and the degree course (particularly the sociology components) made me aware of the societal constraints on my daily action as a teacher and offered some explanation of the social phenomena with which I was daily confronted at school. At this time I was teaching in an 11-16 comprehensive school in the North East. In this post, I was second year tutor and Science specialist, and therefore involved in both the pastoral and academic organisation of the school. In order to fulfil part of the assessment requirements for the part-time degree, I undertook some ethnographic work in the school in which I was teaching. The resulting dissertation was concerned with selection procedures in the comprehensive school, and focused upon the perspectives of teachers involved in a subject option scheme. My strong personal interest in the ethnography of the school led me to register for a higher degree. It was my intention to expand my exploratory study of the option scheme from dissertation to thesis proportions. However, growing dissatisfaction with the 'traditional' and exam oriented teaching in the comprehensive school, plus enhanced promotion prospects with a newly acquired first degree, prompted me to apply for posts of Science coordinator in 9-13 middle schools. At my second interview I was offered and accepted a post as Science coordinator at a 9-13 middle school in the Midlands. I have now been teaching at this school for five years.

Having arrived at the school, I was shocked to find that the secondary practices of subject specialism and setting were more pervasive than they had been at the 11-16 comprehensive school. I had expected that the middle school organisation and teacher pupil relationships would reflect the official philosophy of the middle school. However, I did not find myself in an environment where the staff were innovative, experimental, idealist, integrative and egalitarian in approach. I found instead that the assumptions which underpinned the organisation of the school were concerned with the selection of and the creation of division between groups of pupils. The middle school was, I found, more about meritocracy than egalitarianism. With this 'reality shock' came the realisation that research which focused on selection was just as viable in the middle school context as it had been in the secondary school. If anything, the middle school seemed more secondary oriented than some secondary schools.

Being a full time teacher at the school and wishing to do ethnographic field work logically meant I could not choose a 'typical' school. The choice had been made - I would be researching my work place. In subsequent surveys of the existing research, particularly Taylor and Garson's and the HMI survey, I was reassured of the 'typicality' of Midway Middle School. In terms of size, catchment area, curriculum, social class composition, racial composition and setting policy it seemed typical of many 9-13 middle schools which had evolved from former secondary modern schools. This fact, I thought, would give external validity to the study.

At the outset of the research I had decided to adopt a symbolic interactionist position to provide an ethnographic description of selection procedures in the school. My starting point was the investigation of the perspectives held by actors, in an attempt to illuminate selection processes. Having adopted this approach, I utilised the main method of

interpretive sociological research, participant observation. Normally, researchers engaging in participant observation would conduct the research in a school for a period - a year seems common - and during this period divide their time between participating and observing. In their role as participant, they may cover lessons for absent teachers, help with games, go on school visits etc. As observer, they might collect field notes in classroom observation, interview pupils and teachers, examine school records, observe interaction in staffrooms etc. Throughout this period of research, their identity to all the participants would be more researcher than teacher. In my position as teacher at the school being researched, I could not fully adopt this research style as my participation was and had to be total. My commitment to the school had to be high because dependant on this was not only my salary but prospects of future professional advancement. My interest in research necessarily had to be subordinate to my interest in the job. My role, therefore, was one of teacher researcher rather than one of participant observer.

The progress of the research conformed to the phases advocated by Atkinson (1978, p 15) after Strauss et al. (1976), which were, in this case, as follows:

- 1 The initial phase. Guided by broadly defined research interests, the fieldworker collects data with a view to trying out a wider range of possible ideas and lines of inquiry.
- 2 The second phase. Significant classes of persons and events begin to emerge. initial research problems may have undergone reformulation, and ideas start to come into focus. Working hypotheses and propositions are formulated with reference to specific aspects of the field of study.
- 3 The third phase. The testing of a restricted number of hypotheses is undertaken.

The progress of the teacher researcher through these three phases of research is both assisted and retarded by the adoption of this research style. A problem to be dealt with before even the initial phase begins is the problem of access.

On my application form for the post at Midway, I had specified my research interests. This matter was raised at the interview by the Science adviser for the authority, who expressed interest in the project. I explained my intended research in a very general way, and used this opportunity to gain permission to carry out research in the school. The subject adviser granted permission, and the headmaster, who seemed ambivalent to the project, also gave his approval. At the commencement of the research, access was granted by two significant 'gatekeepers', one of whom, being apparently indifferent to the research, did nothing to interfere with its course, a fact which must lend some support to the Atkinson hypothesis (Atkinson 1981). Bargaining for participation was therefore reduced to those contexts where I would not normally be expected to be present, for example a first year allocation meeting (my teaching was restricted to second, third and fourth years). Other contexts, such as classrooms (for brief and informal observation), meetings, staffroom and social events in and out of school, all remained highly accessible to me.

If the role of teacher-researcher afforded ease of access, it also made more likely the possibility of researcher 'going native' and identifying too strongly with the concerns of the other participants, thereby reducing objectivity. Naturally, to some extent, I did identify with some of the concerns of the other teachers, for daily I was confronted with the same sort of problems which they, too, had to face. Several factors, however, ensured that total submersion in the culture was avoided. The very fact

that I had adopted the role of researcher (a role known to most of my colleagues) to a degree set me apart from the other teachers at the school. Quite often, when I asked the staff questions which were in fact unconnected with my research, they would refer to it. For instance, I was once trying to trace a lost dinner ticket for a boy in my class, and I asked a teacher if she knew where I could get an up to date list of all third year children receiving free dinners. She asked me, "Is this for your research or for something else?" On the familiarity-strangeness continuum I was located near to the strangeness pole. Although having taught for ten years, this was my first experience of a middle school. It was, therefore, 'anthropologically strange' to me. As a newcomer, I had many features of the organisation explained to me by prominent reality definers. The deputy head, for instance, stressed the importance of discipline, and asked me to report any difficulties I was having with the fourth year low ability sets. When I explained that I was not having any difficulty with these pupils, he replied, "Oh, but you will."

The isolation afforded by my researcher/newcomer role was reinforced by the organisation of the school itself. The 9-13 middle school, although having to run secondary type courses in the upper years, is in fact under-resourced to do this in terms of staff and equipment. I was the only Science specialist at Midway, and taught Science for 32 out of 35 periods. This of course meant that I was not interacting with other teachers in professional enterprises, such as team teaching or open plan work in year bases. In my role as Science specialist, I did not have to enlist the cooperation of other teachers in designing or implementing the Science curriculum. My previous experience as a teacher also meant that I could cope with the situations I met in the classroom, and did not have to rely on the support of other members of staff to get through the day. Despite this partly sought, partly enforced isolation, I still managed to

achieve a rapport and level of trust with the majority of staff, and felt that I knew them all sufficiently well to recognise friendship groupings, personality clashes, idiosyncracies, personal antagonisms etc.

In this role, I was able to achieve some measure of objectivity while being sufficiently familiar with the staff to prevent elaborate 'impression management' on their part. Since they perceived me as a full time teacher at the school and therefore sharing their concerns, why should they present a 'front'? This was particularly true of 'natural talk' in 'natural settings', such as meetings, in the staffroom and informal conversations. It was less true of interviews. In the interview, my role as researcher was prominent, and the staff also knew my personal proclivity for mixed ability grouping, and that I had adopted this mode of organisation for Science teaching against the wishes of the headmaster. I may, therefore, have appeared as someone 'with an axe to grind'. In interview, some of the teachers seemed uneasy and guarded, and tested any trust with phrases like 'Is this going any further?', 'not mentioning any names, but . . .', 'Who is this for?', 'The head won't hear this, will he?' and 'This may be unprofessional, but . . .'. Normally, with the exception of teacher interviews, my data collection did not interrupt the normal business of the institution since my research methods involved unobtrusive measures.

In sampling for interviews, I was aware of formal role differentiation and informal role differentiation, and teachers were selected who would represent a range of views. Teachers interviewed included headmaster, deputy headmaster, senior mistress, subject coordinators, general classroom teachers and a probationer.

The disadvantages of the teacher researcher role arise from role conflict and ethics. As a total participant, this meant that the whole of my

timetabled time in school had to be devoted to the professional duties of a teacher. My interviews with teachers and elicitation of teacher constructs had to be conducted before school, at lunchtime or after school. In this, I had the complete cooperation of all the staff interviewed. They willingly gave up their time to help me, a fact which constantly impressed me. Opportunities to collect data during teaching time had to be deferred. There were many situations where there was conflict between research interests and professional duties. For the reasons stated earlier, my obligations to the school were never ignored.

Ethical considerations involved confidentiality on my part, with promises not to reveal information given by informants to other members of staff. I told all teachers about to be interviewed that the information they volunteered would be confidential, and asked that this trust be made reciprocal by requesting that they did not reveal the type of questions I was interested in to other members of staff who would probably be interviewed. As far as the staff were concerned (following my reassurances), the end product of the research, the thesis, would be seen only by a distant academic community involved in the evaluation of my work, who obviously did not know the school or any of the teachers in it. During the course of the work, a few teachers expressed interest in reading the finished thesis. I am sure that to allow a limited number of the staff to read the thesis would be unethical. Reporting findings would best be done at a full staff meeting arranged for this sole purpose. So far, this has not been requested by the staff or by the headmaster.

Ethical considerations also led to a revised research programme. At the outset of the research, I had intended to link teacher perceptions with pupil careers. Since examination of pupil careers would have involved

investigation of pupil perspectives, I decided not to proceed with this part of the research. My role as teacher would have seriously affected, in my opinion, the quality of data elicited from pupils when investigating their perceptions of setting and differential educational experiences. Also I expected that their perceptions would, in part, involve evaluation of their teachers, who were of course my colleagues. I found this aspect of the research potentially fascinating, but ethically unacceptable. However, recent research strategies (Pollard 1982) have pointed to the possibility of minimising some of these role problems and moral dilemmas.

I was aware of the possibility that using data of one type only, for instance, teacher accounts, may not produce a valid ethnographic description. Therefore, multiple methods have been used. Data have been gathered using a variety of techniques (qualitative and quantitative), and in a variety of contexts. These are as follows:

<u>Field Notes</u>	Collected during the course of the study in different contexts: year/subject meetings, classrooms, staff meetings, staffroom, informal conversations.
<u>Transcripts</u>	Transcriptions of taped interviews and meetings. An example of one interview transcript and of one meeting transcript are provided in the Appendices.
<u>Repertory Grid Technique</u>	Involving the elicitation of teacher constructs and teacher ranking of pupils.
<u>Statistical Techniques</u>	Quantitative data, analysed by Principal Component Analysis, Cluster Analysis, and Spearman's Rank Correlation.
<u>Documents</u>	School self evaluation report, school

handbook, timetable, set lists, class lists,
Maths test scores.

Utilising multiple methods in an attempt to provide an accurate ethnographic account constitutes triangulation. Triangulation ensures that data which are collected in different contexts and possibly using different methods can be compared, and that the account of the institution produced by using such data will possess a high degree of validity.

However, despite my use of data triangulation technique, and my search for untypical or disconfirming examples, the accuracy of the description of life in one 9-13 middle school is subject to the same distortions as was Ball's (Ball 1981) of the comprehensive school.

'Inevitably . . . my portrayal of the school will include a number of distortions. The reality of a social institution as large and varied as a comprehensive school is far too complex and multi-faceted to be susceptible to complete or totally adequate presentation through the relatively crude and inexact conceptual mechanism of sociology. Much of the analysis is handled through second order constructs and categories which rigidify, simplify and reify the actual interpretations, perspectives and meanings held by the teachers and pupils. What is offered here is an approximation to the reality, an account derived from the experiences of a single researcher, with all the problems of selection, chance and bias that entails.' (p xviii)

APPENDIX (2)

Transcript of a meeting of the teachers in the first year team to
allocate children in the first year to Maths sets

APPENDIX (2)Transcript of a meeting of the teachers in the first year team to allocate children in the first year to Maths sets

Teachers present: Mrs Bramley (First Year Leader)

Mrs Welch

Mrs John

Miss Fish

Mrs John . . . Yeah, but there's another one with them all in order.

Mrs Welch Did you find that your lists actually matched up with your feelings about your kids?

Miss Fish What lists?

Mrs Welch Your lists in order of um . . .

Miss Fish You're talking about Maths?

Mrs Welch Yeah, Maths.

Mrs John Not completely.

Mrs Welch Mine didn't either . . .

PAUSE

Mrs Welch What I've done is put my lists in order . . . my class in order . . . the way I think they've been performing.

Miss Fish That's the fairest way of doing it . . . I gave mine a second test . . . I gave them two and took the average.

Mrs John Oh, this is ridiculous! (She has lost the class list of scores for the Maths test.)

Mrs Welch You've lost yours as well? Jane's lost hers as well.

Mrs John This is irrelevant for me . . . just a comment . . .
(untranscribable)

- Mrs Welch It depends what you're saying . . . I don't think you ought to really. (Laughs)
- Miss Fish Plus general performance.
- Observer What's that, classwork?
- Miss Fish Yes, written and oral work.
- (All the teachers begin to sort through lists of pupils' test marks and classwork grades.)
- Mrs Welch Teachers and bits of paper go together, don't they?
- (Shared laughter)
- (Mrs Bramley, the first year leader, has, up to this point in the meeting, not been present in the room but has been searching the staffroom for her lost lists of pupil test scores.)
- Mrs Bramley enters the room.
- Mrs Welch Any joy?
- Mrs Bramley Sorry, the only thing I can do is . . . I just don't . . . can't think where the hell it can have gone because I had it this morning.
- Mrs Welch Probably fell out in the staffroom.
- Mrs John I've lost mine too.
- (untranscribable)
- Mrs Bramley You saw me with them this morning. I'm sure I put them back in here. (Searches through bag and papers) It must be in the staffroom.
- Mrs Welch What was your top score, Sue?
- Miss Fish 28.
- Mrs Welch Yeah, I got 28. Who's that, Simon?
- Miss Fish Two got 28, Bingo!
- Mrs Welch Ah.
- Miss Fish Simon Robbins and Michael Willshaw. Michael Willshaw's a beautiful little boy.

Mrs Welch Is he?

Miss Fish Yes.

Mrs Welch That's something his sister couldn't do.

Miss Fish He's different to his sister. On first meeting, you think, ah, another Angela, but he's an intellectual bohemian.

Mrs Welch Yeah.

Miss Fish He's on the ball, a bright child.

Mrs Welch What was your lowest mark?

Miss Fish 7, and he's in Set 5 . . .
(untranscribable)

Mrs Welch I've got two 1s. (scores of 1)

Miss Fish I've got two 5s actually, three 5s. (scores of 5)

Mrs Bramley re-enters the room, still without her test scores.

Mrs Welch Oh Jane, let's start without your results then.

Mrs Bramley Oh, I am sorry about this.

Mrs Welch Can we start with Set 5?

Mrs Bramley Yes sure.

Mrs Welch I sent Andrew Ricketts and Craig Swift on the basis of the first test, which was a 1 for Craig and a 5 for Andrew and, um, Darryl Garden who I was really surprised got 11 and yet he scored a 1 on this latest test, the same as Craig, and Andrew Ricketts who is going to Alan (remedial group teacher of Set 5) actually scored 7.

Miss Fish We really need Alan here, don't we.

Mrs Welch He's on duty, isn't here?

Miss Fish What does he say?

Mrs Welch Well, I haven't had a chance to speak to him but . . . do you know offhand how many went to Alan originally, because if there's a space . . .

- Mrs Bramley It's not possible, is it? He did mention that he's got somebody, I can't remember who, might be possible to come back. (Searches through lists) Oh, that's an English group. Well, how many have you got? I've got four.
- Miss Fish I've got three.
- Mrs Welch I've got two.
- Mrs Bramley Yes, it was eleven, wasn't it? He's (Alan) got one space and one he wants to send back probably.
- Mrs Welch Because Darryl Garden definitely needs to go into Set 5. He scored 1 on this test and 11 on the last test, and he's just not coping at all.
- Mrs Bramley We're just not going to get it done. I'm sorry, it's my fault entirely.
- Mrs Welch Well, is that alright to put him down for . . .
- Mrs Bramley Well certainly, I haven't got anyone else, I don't think, who I want to send to Alan, but Set 4 and 5 are very flexible anyway.
- Mrs Welch Yeah.
- Mrs Bramley Can we just do the 1s? (Set 1)
- Mrs Welch OK.
- Miss Fish Huh! I seem to have an intelligent lot.
- Mrs Welch Well, what sort of numbers are we thinking in terms of? I've got thirty.
- Mrs Bramley Thirty for Set 1, isn't it?
- Mrs Welch Well, 'ish.
- Mrs Bramley What did you have last year?
- Mrs Welch Well, we had more children last year, didn't we?
- Mrs Bramley That's right, 105 children at the moment.
- Miss Fish Take off how many?
- Mrs Bramley Twelve for Alan.

- Mrs Welch Twelve for Alan, so that leaves ninety three. Thirty for Set 1, that leaves sixty three.
- Mrs Bramley So that's 2,3 and 4. (Sets 2,3 and 4)
- Mrs Welch Yes, so two twenty fives and a thirteen?
- Mrs Bramley I could take more than thirteen, make mine sixteen, what does that leave us?
- Mrs Welch Sixteen, that leaves forty seven.
- Mrs Bramley That's about a twenty four and a twenty three, isn't it?
- Mrs Welch Twenty four, twenty three, sixteen and twelve.
- Mrs Bramley Unless you want to make . . .
- Miss Fish It just depends on what we've got, in the way of material.
- Mrs Bramley Yes, it gives us a rough idea.
- Mrs Welch Right, we're talking in terms of seven or eight from each class for Set 1.
- Mrs Bramley I've got two definites before we go any further, very high flyers, Harry and Neetasha.
- Mrs Welch I've got five.
- Miss Fish Put down Michael Willshaw, Simon Robbins. I've got a whole . . . seem to have some good Maths people this year. Nicholas Archer (Laughter), Russell Houseman's going to be good.
- Mrs Bramley Is he?
- Miss Fish Yes.
- Mrs Welch That's what happened to Paul to start off with. (Paul is Russell's brother, now in the fourth year.)
- Mrs Bramley And he sank then, did he?
- Mrs Welch Mmm.
- Mrs Bramley Oh.
- Miss Fish I think he's different kettle of fish. He's . . . (Clicks fingers)

- Mrs Welch Good?
- Miss Fish Yes.
- (Nods and mutters of agreement with clicked fingers)
- Miss Fish Nicholas Holland. I could go on with no effort.
- Mrs Bramley What sort of scores have you got from them? Are they above 25?
- Miss Fish Yeah, 25 plus. I did two tests and they were comparable, and one child who scored 26 scored 19 on the other one.
- Mrs Bramley Look, we haven't got time to do this properly now, have we? And I haven't got my stuff. How do you feel about tomorrow lunch time?
- Mrs Welch We've got Maths tomorrow morning, so we'll have to hold on to our classes again.

This very brief meeting of ten minutes is postponed until all the participants have their test scores with them.

Continuation of the meeting next day - the meeting begins by returning to set placements for Set 5:

- Miss Fish . . . Ricki Meadows, Alison York and Susan Lock.
- Mrs Bramley Right.
- Mrs Welch I've got Andrew Ricketts, Craig Swift, and yesterday we agreed to put Darryl Garden in as well.
- Mrs Bramley That's right.
- Mrs Welch I haven't sent him yet, because I thought I would wait until . . .
- Mrs Bramley Who have you got, Mary?
- Mrs John I've got Sarah Dyer and . . . (untranscribable)
- Mrs Bramley So then in Set 5 we have twelve, which is about right, isn't it? So I'm sorry I wasn't with it yesterday, but we

- said sixteen for Set 4, didn't we?
- Mrs Welch Yes.
- Mrs Bramley And what were the others?
- Mrs Welch Twenty three for Set 3, twenty four for Set 2, and thirty for Set 1. Can I tell you I have two children who are definitely leaving?
- Miss Fish I've got one who seems to have disappeared.
- Mrs Bramley Yes, well, the thing is . . .
- Mrs Welch Well, shall we put them in?
- Mrs Bramley Yes, put them in for now, and we'll go through that at the meeting tomorrow and find out what's happening, but put them in for now.
- Mrs Welch OK.
- Miss Fish So what do we have to do? Set 1?
- Mrs Bramley Set 1 definites first, so Brenda?
- Mrs Welch Elizabeth Wilson, Heidi Bamford, Sarah Long . . .
- Mrs Bramley Can I have, just out of interest, the scores on the test we've just given them?
- Mrs Welch Elizabeth Wilson scored 28, Heidi Bamford 26, Sara Long didn't do it, she scored 19 on the first test. I've just given some additional things just to coincide with what I thought the order would be, and they've certainly come out top in that.
- Mrs Bramley Are those your three definites, or have you got some more?
- Mrs Welch I've got four definites, Paul Hunter . . .
- Mrs Bramley What did he score?
- Mrs Welch He scored 23, but it was because he didn't finish the work rather than not being able to do it I think. Chris Fellows scored 26.
- Mrs Bramley You think he's Set 1?

- Mrs Welch Definitely. Umm Alan . . .
- Mrs Bramley What about you, Mary?
- Mrs John Lucy Dyson 27, Mark Lawson 25, James West 25. I've got a couple of 22s and 23s I think ought to go in.
- Mrs Welch Yes, I've got 23s as well.
- Mrs Bramley Sue, what have you got for Set 1?
- Miss Fish Michael Willshaw 28, Simon Robbins 28, Nicholas Archer 25, Nicholas Holland - I told you I gave mine two tests, didn't I . . .
- All Yes.
- Miss Fish . . . he scored 24 but he's certainly a Set 1 . . . hang on, let me tick off (list). I'm giving names and not keeping a record.
- Mrs Bramley While you're doing that, I'm putting down Neetasha and Harry. They are a . . . petulant balance.
- Mrs Welch It was out of 31.
- Miss Fish Are you ready for somebody else . . . Russell Houseman. Now he was away, but um, just looking at his work and performance . . .
- Mrs Bramley Oh sure, we want something else as well. I was just interested.
- Miss Fish . . . but I was just explaining he was away.
- Mrs Bramley Yes. Right. (Counts up to seventeen)
- Mrs Welch We've got to go down to the 24s and what have you. Well, my next one on ability would have to be Deena Brown, she scored 23.
- Miss Fish I've got a 24, Siobahn Rivers.
- Mrs Bramley And she's a 24.
- Mrs Welch I've got a 24 I think ought to be in Set 2.
- Mrs Bramley Well, that's fine, yes.

- Mrs Welch And I've got a 23 that ought to be in Set 2 as well.
- Mrs John And I've got a 24, Andrew Fairclough.
- Mrs Bramley Could he cope?
- Mrs John Yeah, and I've got a 23 and a 22. The 23 is Joanna Judge and the 22 Louise Lamb.
- Miss Fish I've got Marcus Mountain, he must be Set 1.
- Mrs Welch What did he score?
- Miss Fish Well, on my two tests he got 26 on one but only 21 on the other one.
- Mrs Welch Yes, well I . . .
- Miss Fish Personality, work, everything.
- Mrs Welch Yes, well I . . . 'cos I've got one who got 20 on the test but on classwork is definitely Set 1 material, that's Joe Downs.
- Miss Fish Oh Joe.
- Mrs John I like him.
- Miss Fish So old fashioned.
- Mrs Welch Lovely, yeah. But he's definitely Set 1 material.
- Miss Fish How many children have we got at the moment?
- Mrs Bramley (Counts up to twenty five)
- Miss Fish Can you put down Sara Weaver?
- Mrs Bramley Ah ah.
- Mrs Welch Is she Set 1! (Very surprised)
- Miss Fish She got a 21 and a 22.
- Mrs Welch That surprises me because she looks as . . . she's a bit . . .
- Miss Fish She's very quiet and timid.
- Mrs Welch That's it, isn't it?
- Mrs Bramley That's probably it. I think actually that Stuart Shepherd really ought to, but he and Harry work much too closely

- together and I think it would be better to split them.
- Mrs Welch Can we leave it at twenty eight for a moment?
- Mrs Bramley Do you want to jump down to Set 4 or do 2s now (Set 2)?
- Mrs Welch 2s I think.
- All Yes, 2s.
- Mrs Welch Sarah Parks, she's the child who scored 24 on the test we had before and I think she's Set 2, but I think she'll work her way up to Set 1 eventually but her confidence isn't there at the moment, and she's desperately slow. Simon Highfield scored 23 - in fact, on first looking at him, you'd think probably he should be in Set 4 but he's
- Miss Fish I was going to say, Simon Highfield! (Disbelief)
- Mrs Welch . . . (Emphatically) Simon Highfield scored 23 on the second test, 17 on the first test and . . .
- Miss Fish Well, you know him.
- Mrs Bramley Yeah, that's fine.
- Mrs Welch Clare Oakley, she scored 20 on the second test.
- Mrs Bramley Have you found out any more about her?
- Mrs. Welch Yeah, she's going.
- Mrs Bramley So Sue, any definites?
- Miss Fish Justin Chappell.
- Mrs Bramley Oh I wish I was taking Set 2.
(Shared laughter)
- Mrs Welch He's desperately slow, isn't he? Justin Chappell.
- Miss Fish His written work is appalling, he's the one that couldn't believe that he got 24 on one of them.
- Mrs Welch Yes, dreadful.
- Miss Fish That's why I think he'd be better in Set 2. Paul Scott, he's got similar problems to Justin, he got 20 actually, and 21 on the other one. Kirstie Cornwell, she got a 20

and a 21.

- Mrs Bramley Definities from you. (Looks at Mary)
- Mrs John John Lancaster got 23, um, I've got a handful. David Spratt got 20, the rest are down in the teens but they're certainly Set 2. Do you want me to go on?
- Mrs Bramley Yeah, sure.
- Mrs John Michael Bates 19, Robert Diamond 18 . . .
- Mrs Bramley Well, it's on what you think as well, it's not just, um.
- Mrs John Anthony Fletcher got 17.
- Miss Fish I've got some 22s and 23s.
- Mrs Bramley Can I just put some of my definities in? Stuart Shepherd 21, Lindsay Parsons 20.
- Mrs John Do you take Set 2, Sue?
- Sue nods.
- Miss Fish I've got Belinda Shute with 23. Dear God, I wish I could get rid of that pain. Sandra Plant?
- Mrs Welch She'll probably work her way up eventually.
- Miss Fish I'll put in Lisa Brooks, she's the one who may . . .
- Mrs Bramley Not be with us.
- Mrs Welch There's a child who missed the second test.
- Miss Fish Oh, Dorothy Leafe.
- Mrs Welch Yeah, scored 15 on the first test, and Kim Wells who's unsure of herself, quite hardworking but terribly untidy. I don't seem to have put very many children in there, I've got . . .
- Mrs Bramley (Counts up to 20) We've got twenty.
- Mrs Welch I think Jonathan Spring really ought to go in there, um, if he scored 19.
- Miss Fish In which case, if there's room, put in Nicola Mudd.
- Mrs John Have we still got room for another?
- Mrs Bramley Yes, who?

Mrs John Wendy South

Miss Fish Isn't she just like Terry (her brother)?

Mrs Welch The image . . . that grin.

Mrs Bramley I don't think I've got anyone else to go in Set 2, actually. So there's one more space.

All (Untranscribable, but Mrs John is worried about who to propose - she is told it doesn't matter)

Mrs Welch Justin Coleman scored 23 and I put him down as Set 3, but I think he's better in that, and as he's going anyway.

Mrs Bramley Oh well, that gives us twenty four.

Mrs John Have you put Angela in or not?

Mrs Bramley I haven't, no.

Mrs John Well, if she could go in there, she's Angela Weston.

Mrs Bramley Right, OK. Do you want to go to Set 4 now?

Miss Fish No.

Mrs Welch We were talking sixteen, so we're talking four each really, aren't we.

Mrs Bramley Well.

Mrs Welch Well about four. This is what always happens, doesn't it.

Mrs Bramley Adam Hardwick definitely. He scored only 5. Nicholas Hill, oh!

Miss Fish Oh God!

Mrs Bramley Ashley Murray.

Miss Fish My potential person is Dave Bryan. He is the laziest person I've ever met. He's quite happy to sit there, and you can tell him off and he's still quite happy to sit.

Mrs Bramley Stacey O'Neill scored 11 on the test but she's really got terrible concepts. You know the ideas . . . she's learned certain things by rote but she just hasn't . . . I'm going to put a star by her.

- Miss Fish She reminds me of a wild animal that Stacey, the look in her eye.
- Mrs Bramley Does she? Well, has she done anything very wild, has she?
- Miss Fish Just look in her eye. You look in her eyes some time.
- Mrs Welch Well, I've got four definites, Darren Wolfe. . . .
(Shared laughter)
- Miss Fish Of course.
- Mrs Welch Lisa Fryer
- Mrs Bramley What sort of scores are you getting from these?
- Mrs Welch Darren Wolfe score 7, Lisa Fryer got 11, and then the other two have to be really on classwork - Gary Storey, he's very poor, very poor, and Chris Buckingham.
- Mrs Bramley What about you, Mary?
- Mrs John Lee got 8, I find, I think, I don't know, I think he could cope in Set 3 but I don't really know.
- Mrs Welch We'll soon sort him out.
- Mrs John Martin Hewitt got 9, and I think he could probably cope in Set 3 as well, but Phillip Ibbotson got 12 but I think he perhaps ought to go
- All Mm.
- Miss Fish I've got one with 11. I think he'd be better in Set 3.
- Mrs Bramley Hold on. (Counts up to ten) I've got room for two more. Probably three more, no, two more because I'd be able to swop with Alan.
- Miss Fish Shall we do the 3s now (Set 3)?
- Mrs Bramley Yeah, then we can come back and see what we've got left. 3 is, twenty three.
- Miss Fish Jonathan French.
- Mrs Welch Oh, isn't he a beautiful little boy, that curly curly hair.

- Miss Fish His attitude is much better. Paul Baker, he's a nice little boy.
- Mrs Welch Yeah.
- Miss Fish Steven Carr scored 19 but he's a Set 3. Jonathan Taylor he's only scored 11, but I am sure he only needs the extra confidence, he scored 15 on my other test.
- Mrs Bramley What about you, Brenda?
- Mrs Welch Set 3. Daniel Costa, he's a lazy little boy. He'll work his way into Set 2 eventually when he gets um . . . um, Daniel, he got 19, um, but his classwork is nowhere near Set 2 material. Um, Rebecca East, she scored 14, she might make it up a bit later on. Lee Tyreman, he's another lazy little boy. Steven Stockton, he's a potential 4 (Set 4) I think . . .
- Miss Fish Oh, like his brother.
- Mrs Welch . . . and, er, Elisa Tweed and Anna Bishop as well. Seems a bit top heavy there, doesn't it.
- Mrs Bramley Well, we'll see how it goes. How about you, Mary?
- Mrs John I've got Laura Barr. She got 11. And Contessa Keys. She got 11. Justine Short got 12. Darren Holmes and Amelia Derbyshire both got 13. These last three could be Set 3 or Set 2, I'm not really sure. Sharron Westminster.
- Mrs Bramley Well, do you want to hang on to them till I put mine down. Christopher Vickers, I'm not sure about Karen Ditchley, she scored 14 but . . . Jason Perkins, Emma Horne - I do like Emma Horne, she's a nice little girl.
- Mrs Welch I haven't met her yet, well, I haven't noticed her.
- Mrs Bramley She's very shy and she (whispers in child like language) comes up and is very helpful. She scored 18 but she's not very good. (Mrs Bramley counts up to twenty one.) So

there's room for a couple more if you want.

Mrs John Well, I've got three left.

Miss Fish Oh! (extreme surprise) I've some to put in anyway, yes.
Are we on Set 3?

Mrs Bramley Yeah.

Miss Fish Well, put Vicki Swann in.

Mrs Bramley Well, we're low actually.

Miss Fish She got 12.

Mrs Welch There are a couple of Set 1s low.

Mrs Bramley There are a couple of Set 1s you might like to push up
from Set 2. Have we used up all the numbers yet? I mean,
has anybody got people they haven't used yet?

Mrs Welch Well, put them where you think they ought to go.

Mrs John I think Sharron Westminster ought to go into Set 2, she
didn't do the test, she was away . . . Ricki Street and
Joanne North are probably Set 3.

Mrs Bramley Ricki Street and Joanne North Set 3. Ricki Street is
really 4 (Set 4). Right, let me just do a quick count
then. We've got twelve in Set 5, thirteen in Set 4 . . .
oh yes, we're low in Set 4.

Mrs Welch That's because you were holding back on Set 4, Sue. You
were saying you had some there but you've only put one
child there.

Miss Fish Dave Bryan.

Mrs Welch Yeah.

Miss Fish He's the only one that's really . . .

Mrs Bramley Set 3 is twenty four, but that really doesn't matter, does
it. Set 2, I've got twenty six in at the moment. I
think I ought to budge up a couple of those.

Miss Fish How many has Set 1 got?

Mrs Bramley } Twenty eight.
Mrs Welch }

Mrs Bramley There's twenty eight, twenty six, twenty four, thirteen
and twelve.

Mrs Welch Do you know what? If that's the situation, I would prefer
Sue to see them together and then decide. (Mrs Welch
teaches Set 2.)

APPENDIX (3)

Transcript of Interview with Mrs Bramley, the First Year Leader

APPENDIX (3)Transcript of Interview with Mrs Bramley, the First Year Leader

- Interviewer Could you tell me something of your own school experience?
As a pupil, type of school subjects, etc.
- Mrs Bramley Secondary school was a girls' grammar school. I didn't
get there through 11+. Our county were one of the first
to give it up. It was done through teachers and inter-
views. I stayed till the sixth form and did eight 'O'
levels and two 'A' levels and an advanced 'O' level,
advanced 'O' level Human Biology. It was like half the
Biology 'A' level course really, and 'A' level Art and
'A' level English. Do you want my 'O' levels?
- Interviewer No. What about your college experience?
- Mrs Bramley I went to Sussex College of Ed which is now part of Sussex
Poly and did a three year course with Art and Craft as my
main course, Drama as my supplementary, and did a BEd,
it was a four year course.
- Interviewer You mentioned before that you were very good at Physics
but had to do Art at school.
- Mrs Bramley It was a small school and when we opted for 'O' levels
Physics and Art were in the same block, therefore I could
do one or the other. Looking back on it I wouldn't have
done that. I wasn't very good at Chemistry but I was
quite good at Biology. I had to give up Art or Physics or
both.
- Interviewer What about teaching experience? What sorts of schools
have you been in since you left college?

and that came up. I talked to quite a lot of people because we never really thought about it. I came to it as a set thing and everybody enjoyed it like that, and I went on like that. When I became first year leader I began thinking, do we really need to be set? Talking to all the teachers, I could find they don't set for Maths, they seem to set within the class. Anyway, they break the class into four groups or whatever within the class.

Interviewer So you've got the red table or the blue table . . . ?

Mrs Bramley That's right. It seemed to me that in, really everybody in one way or another was setting, and if you're going to do that in your classroom it may work better our way, to actually split them four ways and have each of us concentrating on one area.

Interviewer Do you arrange English groups within a class in the way you described Maths in other schools?

Mrs Bramley The thing about English is . . . for example, when you are doing things like discussion you can have the whole class, when you are doing things like creative writing you can start from the same point and work at the same level. I don't use many of the books in the English cupboard. I'm not terribly keen on them, but if I do use them I put children on them at their level at the page they're on. I do teach sometimes in groups in English but not all the time, and things like reading activities - that's a very individual thing anyway, so that's individual throughout the class, so I sometimes set within the class for English, but not all the time, so I think there's justification for mixed ability for that.

Mrs Bramley Couldn't get a job when I left college, worked in a bookshop for six months, then I got a two day a week job at a prep school teaching Art and Craft and some English. and I did that for six months. When Stephen moved up here I did supply work for the first term up to the Christmas, and quite a lot of it at this school in Joan's room, doing Home Economics which was great fun, and then got the job which I've had for six years, and then I've been year leader for a year and a half now, and that's it.

Interviewer What about age ranges of the children you have taught?

Mrs Bramley I was actually middle school trained and I've had one secondary practice and two middles and the prep school of seven to thirteen year olds.

Interviewer Have you ever considered yourself to be a subject specialist?

Mrs Bramley When I left college I wasn't sure whether I wanted to go into middle or secondary. Having worked here for a while I liked the social side of it, I don't know whether you call it social education but that side which has your own clan for a lot of the time, get to know children, and then I see myself as an Art and Craft specialist and that's what I was employed as, and Drama as well which was my second subject. I see myself as a specialist but I'm if I went to another school I would like to take the class teaching side more seriously, rather than an Art and Craft specialist.

Interviewer Why do you think Maths is the only subject to be set in the first year?

Mrs Bramley Interesting that you should ask because I went to a first school/middle school liaison meeting a couple of weeks ago

Interviewer Do you think there is something inherently difficult about Maths which makes it a special case?

Mrs Bramley No. Not particularly no, but I think perhaps at this stage that . . . well, one of the reasons is they come up from first schools with such a differing sort of levels on their Maths. When I'm doing things like grammar in English I certainly do set within the class, but when I'm doing Maths we do a concept at a time, so we tend to do some time on shape, or some time on times tables, subtraction and things like that. I tend to feel that I'm teaching a concept and there needs to be a lot of discussion and a lot of talk before we get down to it, so that they've got it into them, and for those sort of lessons I don't think it's necessarily more difficult than English, but they really need one teacher talking to the children at a starting level each time we start a new topic in Maths, and I think also I teach Set four Maths, and I certainly feel their concepts are so dodgy that if they were in mixed ability classes, I mean they need so much time, we're working on subtraction at the moment and we're working on it so basically - the children have really missed out, they really don't have much idea about why you write these things on the piece of paper. So I do think in that case it's really useful, and of course you get smaller groups down the bottom, we got sixteen in my class so I can give much more individual attention, so I think there is some justification for that.

Interviewer Do you think it works?

Mrs Bramley I do. In that case I'm really convinced about it. There was a time when I first took over as year leader I wrote

down a number of things that I wanted to change, or maybe wanted to change and that (setting for Maths) was one of them, but the more I think of it the more it really works as it is.

Interviewer Do you think you get it right first time with your test scores and allocation meetings, or do you think there's widespread misplacement?

Mrs Bramley I don't think either of those are alright. I think we get it . . . it's very difficult. Actually, that worries me a bit, because I think once you've put a child in a set they, particularly in the lower sets, they sometimes decide that's the set they're in, and work to that set, which might not happen otherwise. Generally, I think we get them roughly in the right place, but we do swop quite quite regularly, and in fact we're coming up for, fairly soon, a meeting on discussing that, we don't really set them till half way through the first half term, so we didn't want to change till after half term, but certainly soon there will be some movement.

Interviewer About how many more over the year?

Mrs Bramley Don't know really, actually in fact it's a bit ongoing. I would think about twenty over the year if you added them up. But there's also children who have not necessarily gone into the wrong set - there's one school, naming no names, where children come to us with very poor backgrounds in Maths, and they tend to start, we've found, in the lower sets and work their way up once they've got the hang of the different concepts, so it's not necessarily a low mathematical ability but a low attainment, therefore they're placed correctly but they earn their way up, if you see

what I mean.

Interviewer Yes. What about the ones that go down?

Mrs Bramley The ones that go down we would have to say we had misplaced.

Interviewer So what would be unreliable - test scores or your perception?

Mrs Bramley Both really, because if you run a system like that you've got to run it fairly soon in the year. We don't know the children that well at that stage, and they may be still going through settling in pangs, and if that's the case the test score isn't going to be very relevant. You know if they go into a blind panic we take both those things into account when we set. For example, I'll find out for you on those set lists I've given you - there were one or two that we set against their scores, not really for what they'd got, either up or down from what we thought. I think some of the higher ones it must be both of those things together.

Interviewer Do you find that when you do the tests you've known the children for about six weeks, do you find their scores match your perception of them or do you get shocks?

Mrs Bramley Generally they match what we would expect. When we get shocks, that's when we look very carefully and maybe don't use the scores completely to do it. What we do is to go through together on the scores to start with, and then every now and then someone will be throwing up somebody who has scored much higher than expected or much lower than was expected and then we will change our views, taking that into account. In fact, in one case this time, we put one person who scored very highly, well high enough for Set 2, into Set 3 because he was in my class and we didn't,

I was very surprised he got the results he did so I raised my perception of him, but I couldn't quite see that he was Set 2 material because of his work habits, which if you're going to be in a high flying set you've got to be able to keep up with them.

Interviewer Do you think your perception of the children changes over the year? Do you think it's to a large degree or not very much?

Mrs Bramley It's probably, at the beginning of the year you make first impressions and I think those definitely change, they change all the time. It's quite a big change for the children, so that when they come to us often our perception is coloured by the fact that they simply haven't settled in or that they're not yet performing in the way that they could.

Interviewer Do you think that your perceptions are very different at the end of the year than they were at the end of six weeks?

Mrs Bramley I'm trying to think back to last year. On some children, yes, and in fact test scores do affect me - just the last couple of days we've been doing the non verbal tests, the NFER ones, and the reading tests, and those are usually the most interesting ones where you have because of the way the children are acting, you make quite wrong assumptions about their ability - their attainment isn't matching their ability, and it tends to be on attainment that you go initially. I haven't marked mine yet. Brenda, she came in this morning and said there were some children who really surprised her by coming very much higher, and that definitely affects the way you look at those children, because you ask why they're not attaining as well.

Interviewer What do you feel about setting in the rest of the curriculum

throughout the age range?

Mrs Bramley Do you mean in the first year?

Interviewer No, in the whole school.

Mrs Bramley Well, I'm personally glad that English setting has gone out of the second year. I think that's a nice thing. I think a lot of the setting that's done in the school is done for curriculum, and timetable reasons, rather than for the children's sort of educational health. I mean, a lot of it seems to be done simply to make it possible for Alan to timetable. I haven't got very much experience of that. - in other years I have taught fairly low sets, third or fourth year English when they have their extra English - as well as the first years - and they seem to me to be getting streamed even though it isn't called that any more. They seem to be getting it into their heads at that stage that 'we are low set, therefore low people'. Certainly last year's lot were very low self image, I think because, perhaps, they were actually doing a different subject to the others, because they were doing extra English instead of French, which was quite a blow to their self esteem. I don't have very much experience further up the school in how it works.

Interviewer What has been your main experience in the past, having mixed ability or ability groups?

Mrs Bramley My main experience has been mixed ability.